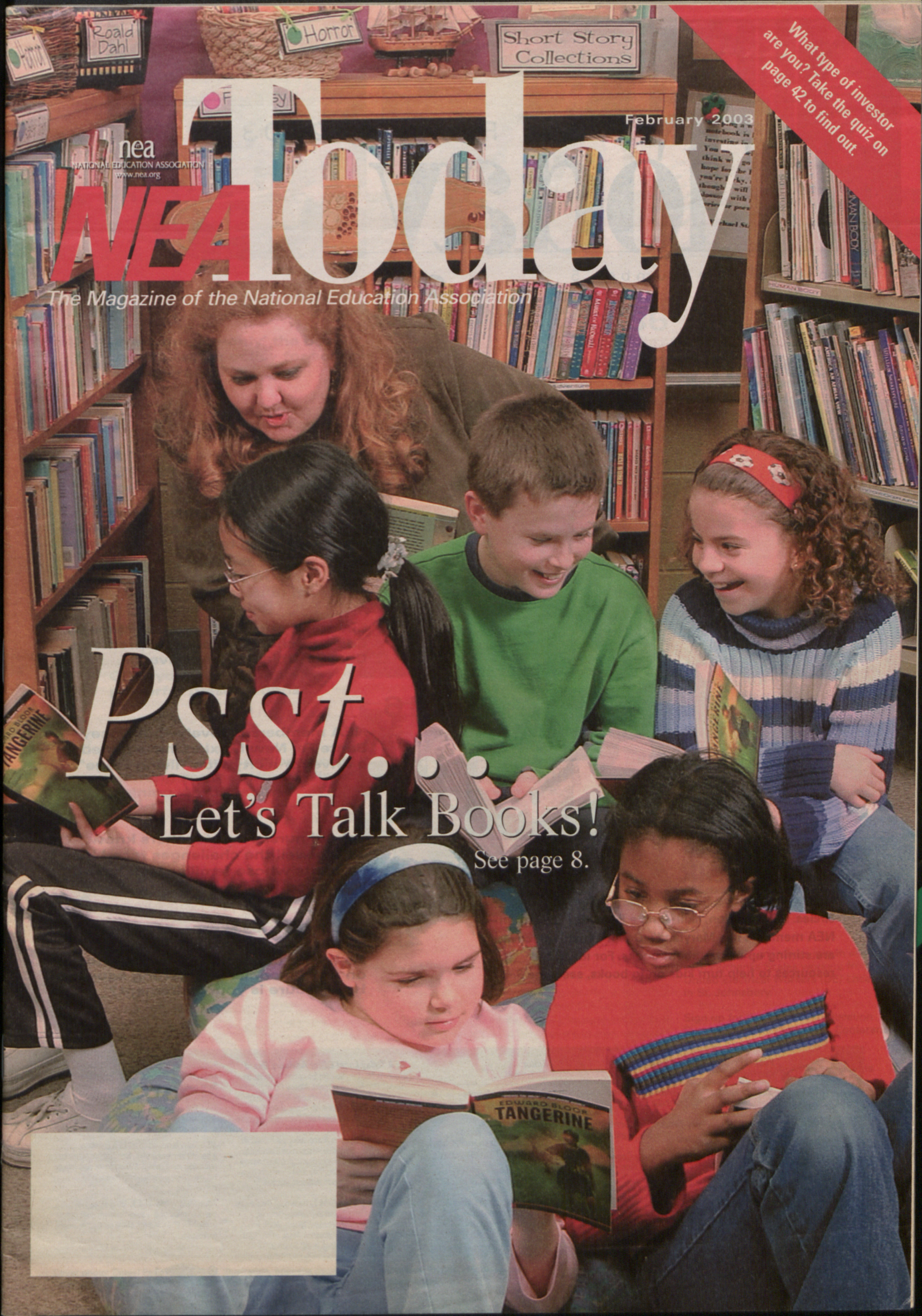




What type of investor
are you? Take the quiz on
page 42 to find out.

Short Story
Collections

Horror

Roald
Dahl

February 2003

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NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education Association

Psst.... Let's Talk Books!

See page 8.



NEA Today

February 2003

Volume 21 • Number 5

COVER STORY



Book Talk

In-class book clubs, 'literary cafés,' student-led reading circles. With passion, skill—and a little bit of chutzpah—NEA members like Maryland's Debbi Tehrani (on cover) are stirring up a buzz about books. For ideas and resources to help turn kids on to books, see page 8.

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NEA Today

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NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published eight times a year, monthly, in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to NEA Today, Attn: NEA Membership Records Address Change, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202/822-7065. **Members:** To change address, see Reader Services box to the right.

NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription price: \$55 institutional, \$90 domestic and foreign. For members, subscriptions represent \$4.25 of annual dues.

Advertising within NEA Today is screened, but the publishing of any advertisement does not imply NEA endorsement of the product or views expressed.



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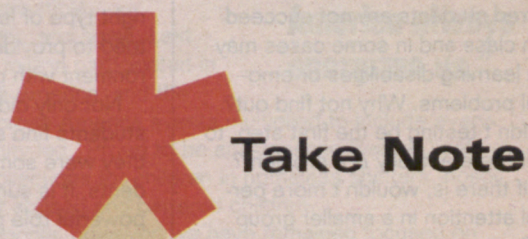
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Making Public Schools Great for Every Child



UNFAIR LABELS

The title "Truth in Labeling" (January cover story) implies that teachers are asking that students be tested for special education *because* they are African-American and that the solution lies in even more heroic efforts by the already beleaguered classroom teacher.

No one is sending successfully functioning children of any race to special education. Obviously, these referred students are not succeeding in class and in some cases may have learning disabilities or emotional problems. Why not find out? Wouldn't testing be the first step, to see if there actually *is* a problem? And if there is, wouldn't more personal attention in a smaller group help?

I am a K-12 ESL teacher in a suburban district and have referred minority (not necessarily Black) students because they showed symptoms of learning disabilities: inability to focus, great difficulty retaining new material, letter reversals. Spanish-speaking students were evaluated in Spanish and the same difficulties showed up in their first language. Other ESL students without these difficulties were catching up with their classmates in a reasonable time.

In all cases, I found the children could learn, since I often worked one-on-one with them, but at a painfully slower rate than their classmates. They needed more than the regular classroom teacher could give. At the very least, elementary teachers should have much smaller classes and an aide in every class from grades one to three.

Telling an overburdened classroom teacher that she needs more training or must come up with even more ways to reach her 25+ students is not the solution.

Kathleen Morgan
Downingtown, Pennsylvania

The school where I just completed my student teaching housed a student population with 75 percent in poverty. There was mainstreaming in each of my classes. At first, it seemed overwhelming, and the end-

Letters

IT'S BEST TO HAVE THE FACTS ABOUT RELIGIONS

I was pleased with "Navigating Religion in the Classroom" (November cover story). In public schools, religion is the topic that all teachers are told to avoid. But avoiding the topic leaves students with numerous questions that, if never addressed, will form into biased opinions about religions. The students will only have bits and pieces they have heard from random sources, which may be unreliable.

It is best to have all the facts. And for me as a teacher, it is helpful to know the basics of as many of the religions in my community as possible. This will prepare me better for the variety of faith-based requirements that some of my students will be taking part in.

Fear of the unknown can cause people to stay in a group that is the most similar to themselves. They will not want to get to know how others lead their lives. Educating youth about religion will help the community come together.

As with any controversial topic, it will be difficult to get support. Teachers have to know all the do's and don't's before entering the classroom. This will help all the students learn more and not cause conflicts among peers.

Thank you!

Stephanie Chlan
St. Cloud, Minnesota



Susan Sanford

less process of learning individualized education plans (IEPs) was a constant struggle. However, I saw that every student can learn with the right type of learning atmosphere. I tried to provide a cooperative environment with groups of mixed ability.

Not only did special education students find success in this setting, they were some of my best students. It is surprising to see what a powerful role positive expectations can play in a student's life.

The article really brought home the importance of a continuous professional development program to enable educators, at all levels of their career, to learn new methodologies.

Also, I was invigorated by the comments of educators who take the time to not stereotype children as special education based on their outbursts. The objective is to provide a safe nurturing environment in which all students can achieve success.

Ronald Yorko
Chester, West Virginia

SOCIAL WORKERS

I was thrilled to see the January Health and Fitness article recognizing the important contribution that school social workers make to our students and their education. Jan Furman's "changing family" group represents the types of services which are increasingly needed for our students and their families to ensure that education can take place in a world that is often chaotic, confusing, and changing.

Students without adequate psycho-social supports will not be able to learn regardless of how talented our teachers are.

Brenda Bachman
Newport, Rhode Island

CAN ANYONE TEACH?

I enjoyed "Credentials Count" (Inside Scoop, January). I earned

my teaching degree in a traditional education preparation program. It bothers me greatly to hear people say, "Anyone can teach" or "Get your degree in anything because you can always be a teacher." Teaching encompasses more than showing up with a smile, having some subject knowledge, and monitoring students. I am very proud to say that I received my degree in education, and I am proud of being a teacher. I do not feel you must have traditional teacher training to be a good teacher; however, I believe in many cases it is beneficial. I work with many teachers who did not have traditional teaching preparation and because of their dedication and natural ability they are wonderful teachers. On the other hand, I have seen and heard of many who struggle because they lack preparation.

Sherry Watts
Tavares, Florida

I strongly believe that teachers are more effective when they live in the community (Debate, January). For 20 years, I taught at Southwest High School in Minneapolis and lived within walking distance. For a time, I had our two daughters in class.

That was an enriching, humbling, and rewarding experience. I was a part of the community, making decisions, voting on issues, being aware of what was happening to everyone, including students, in the community.

I saw the parents of my students as neighbors, friends, colleagues, community consumers. I had many short conferences about their children in the aisles of the grocery store.

Students saw me as I mowed the lawn, shoveled the snow, maintained the house. Our paths crossed many times.

Harold C. Strobel
Minneapolis, Minnesota

PARENTS AND HOMEWORK

I was a bit disturbed by the tone of many of the responses to "What do you do when you think student work is parent work?" (Dilemma, January). These educators seemed to assume that parents were doing the work for the child. As an educator and parent of an autistic child, I often had to spend many hours working with my child to satisfy homework requirements. Many times, my child would give the responses and I would encode them for him. This was a huge energy drain for both of us, but worth the learning results. I would tell the teachers this, but my explanation was not always accepted, particularly by inflexible individuals.

But the real question is, are the assignments necessary, or busywork mandated by school policy?

As an educator, I often found homework that looked as if a parent had helped. I welcomed parents choosing to become involved in their child's education.

I sometimes would share the dilemma that I faced with my son, who would become too tired to write, but could give oral directives. That often helped to clarify the situation. Parents may need to negotiate with teachers to obtain a reasonable homework load for their child.

Donna Hunter
Myrtle Creek, Oregon

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

I appreciated your November President's Viewpoint. My daughter is in her fifth year of teaching children with specific learning disabilities, and the "Respect Shortage" she suffers the most is from disruptive, disrespectful students who sabotage her classroom. I taught 35 years; I don't think she'll come close.

Rosemary Buchanan
Belle Glade, Florida



The Greatest Gift

Let us all celebrate the joy of helping children and young people become enthusiastic and invincible readers.

NEA member and reading teacher Sharon Suskin suggested to us several years ago that we should do "something" about encouraging more adults to read aloud to children, because children who are read to at home are much more likely to become skilled and enthusiastic readers in school.

Well, we heard you, Sharon, and that "something" you asked for turned out to be an NEA-organized, national read-in on Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2, 1998. We called it Read Across America, and everyone pitched in—K-12 teachers, education support professionals, retired and student educators, and higher education faculty and staff—the whole NEA family. And joining us were principals, parents, and policy makers.

We had high hopes for Read Across America, but to tell you the truth, it succeeded way beyond our wildest expectations. More than 10 million adults and children participated in that first Read Across America. The combination of that zany Cat in the Hat and celebrities reading to little kids proved irresistible.

So we did it again...and again. Last year more than 45 million participated in NEA's Read Across America, and the number of Read Across America events multiplied to include everything from community-led "Proud to be an American Reader" celebrations to book collections for children in homeless shelters, hospitals, and homes for abused and battered children.

Through all the hoopla, however, we have remained focused on NEA's Read Across America's duo goals: to encourage adults to read aloud to the children in their lives and to motivate young people to read on their own—not just this one day, but 365 days a year!

Reading opens the wonders of the world to our children. Reading ensures they will keep on learning, and reading will enrich their lives.

To sit with a child and read Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon* is a pleasure beyond all measure:

In the great green room
There was a telephone
And a red balloon
And a picture of—
The cow jumping over the moon.

And as a young person, to lose oneself in a wonderful book such as Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is worth a truckload of video games. As this year's Read Across America co-chair Ming-Na says, "I want to convince young people of the importance—and sustained joy—that reading can bring to anyone's life."

We want to provide our students with reading skills, certainly. We want to make them fearless and invincible readers, capable of taking on any text. But we also want our students to become enthusiastic readers. That is why teachers and education support professionals not only teach reading skills and comprehension to children, but the wonder of reading as well.

The Appalachian author Lee Smith, who also teaches illiterate adults how to read, says, "Learning how to read is like coming out of a deep hole. Learning how to read changes your life forever."

And NEA's Read Across America always energizes us—because as educators we are rescuers and life changers. We love books. And what we have loved, we hope others will love, and we will teach them how.

At NEA, we are dedicated to the proposition that a quality education is the fundamental right of every child in America—every child—and the foundation of a quality education is the ability to read for a lifetime.

Comments? E-mail Reg Weaver at RegWeaver@nea.org.

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AMENDING SPECIAL ED

Least restrictive environment (LRE) has to be redefined ("If I Wrote the Special Education Law," November). For some disabilities, the LRE is *not* to be included or mainstreamed with regular education students. Case in point: Students who are deaf and whose primary language is American Sign Language are *more* restricted by being in a learning environment in which the only person with whom they can communicate is the adult interpreter assigned for academic instruction. The LRE for students who are deaf and use sign language is to be in a class in which full communication and instruction is in American Sign Language.

Ann Hughes
Richmond, Virginia

When are the people who have never been in a classroom going to let those of us who are there daily make choices as to the best instructions for a child? The least restrictive environment (LRE) for the violent, mentally retarded child who attacks others is not always a classroom in a public school. We are failing, not only that child, but also the other 10 or 12 who are sitting while we try to get a student under control.

Secondly, why are students who are years behind in academics made to test at the grade level they are in at the time and not at their academic level? It makes no sense to write an IEP that calls for teaching a child at the second-grade level and then test at the eighth-grade level.

Julia Flowers
Independence, Kansas

GET OUR PENSIONS BACK

A terrible problem now exists for me and for other retired teachers, and current teachers will face the same problem unless we all take action. It is the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP), which takes away Social Security retirement earned by teachers and spousal and survivor's benefits earned by spouses of teachers, even though we have paid into the system.

I have lost half of my retirement funds earned from working outside the school district, and all of the spousal benefits to which I was entitled through my husband's lifetime of paying into the system.

Tragically, when either my husband or I die, the other will be left with just one income because the GPO will offset Social Security survivor's benefits. To be realistically morbid, I will receive \$21 a month from Social Security upon my husband's death, and, because my husband will continue to draw my teacher retirement upon my death, his Social Security will be offset, receiving about the same small amount as I would.

Congressmen are secure in their retirement, but if they were hurt in retirement as we are, I bet they would abolish GPO/WEP in one day.

I am asking that all teachers (retired and current) write their U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives demanding that they support the Social Security Fairness Act, which would eliminate the GPO/WEP.

One Congressman reported that beginning in 1966, the Social Security trust money has been used to finance parts of the American budget and that over \$600 billion in just the last decade was taken from the trust fund by the government. How terribly ironic that those of us who paid into the system are being denied the little money that would help us, yet our own government takes money out by the billions!

Martha Callaway
Wichita Falls, Texas

I have written to my Congressman and my Senator more times than I care to admit about repealing the Government Pension Offset but have never received a definite answer. It's as if they have more important things to do. I know there are many things that are very important, in fact, life-threatening. However, I feel this is important as it is really money that should have been ours to begin with.

If my husband were alive I would not know how to explain to him why we do not get this money he earned.

Please do not give up. We may never get what is ours but we should not stop trying.

Suzanne Nesci
Las Vegas, Nevada

(Editor's note: As reported in NEA Today throughout the last year, GPO/WEP hurts many thousands of NEA members. Repealing these unfair offsets is a top NEA priority. To learn more, and to join the repeal effort, visit www.nea.org/lac/socsec. You will find fact sheets, talking points, and sample letters to Congress. There's also a link to help you e-mail your Senator and Representative. The most effective lobbyists are a politician's own constituents.)

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with NEA Today in one of four ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
 - Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday, click on "Reader Services," and fill in the "Letter to the Editor" section.
 - By e-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
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- Letters are edited for length and clarity.

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The Beaumont Foundation of America is an extraordinary example of how the civil justice system can work to make a difference in the lives of Americans. The Foundation's core purpose is to grant state-of-the art, Internet-enabled, wireless computer hardware to Americans who do not have access to the vast educational benefits of the Internet, and to collaborate with existing successful organizations to provide the technical support to utilize it. Grants from the Foundation will be available across America.

The Beaumont Foundation of America was created with funds generated by the settlement of a class action lawsuit. The Foundation believes the unique circumstances under which it was

created can serve as a model for similar class action settlements and give rise to a new form of American philanthropy.

The Beaumont Foundation of America seeks collaboration with successful philanthropies that share its mission of providing access to information for everyone, everywhere, anytime.

The Beaumont Foundation of America is granting computer hardware to qualifying non-profits, faith-based and community organizations, libraries, schools and individuals in need. **Grant applications for 2003 are now being accepted through March. For more information, including future grant application opportunities, log on to www.bmtfoundation.com or call us at 866.505.COMP.**



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What's in a Soccer Ball?

Teaching students how they connect with the rest of the world.

BY BILL BIGELOW

When I was in high school, I took a world geography course. It was like a memory Olympics: Who could locate Poland's major cities? Who recalled Argentina's top three exports?

We learned facts, but acquired no insight. We didn't talk about the war raging in Vietnam, tensions in the Middle East, or the decolonization struggles in Africa.

Mark leaves, and I turn to the class: "All right people, time to pay me back. I lent you guys \$5 and that's a lot of money."

Protests are all I get: "You didn't lend us \$5. Mark got the money, and he's spending it right now"; "I'm not paying you \$5, get it from Mark"; and sometimes ruder remarks.

I point out that like it or not, Mark is their class leader and the money he borrowed was on behalf of the entire class, so the entire class is responsible for paying this debt.

in the center of the room and ask students to describe it in writing. "It's just a soccer ball," someone says. "What's to write about?"

I tell them: "No need for an essay. Simply describe the ball."

Most students' descriptions are ho-hum, lifeless. They are all about appearance: "The ball is a sphere which has white hexagons and black pentagons..." began one student. They miss the "Made in Pakistan."

We read aloud Bertolt Brecht's poem, "Questions From a Worker Who Reads":

Who built the seven gates of Thebes?

The books are filled with names of kings.

Was it kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?...

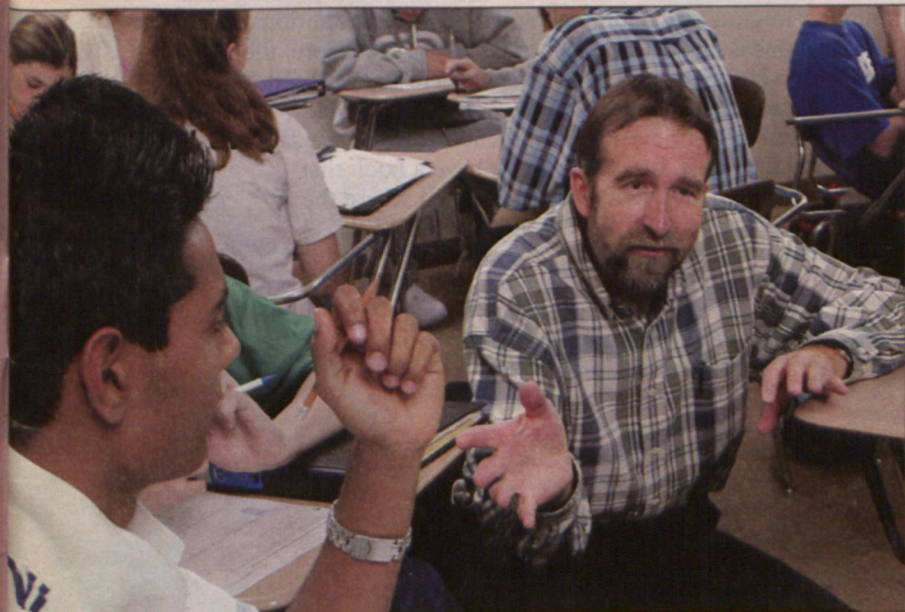
I ask students to keep the poem in mind and to rewrite their soccer ball descriptions. Versions one and two couldn't be more different. One student imagined herself as a soccer ball worker: "I sew together these shapes of leather. I stab my finger with my needle. I feel a small pain, but nothing much, because my fingers are so callused....I sew and sew all day long to have these balls shipped to another place where they represent fun. Here, they represent the hard work of everyday life."

This is a central piece of a critical global literacy, albeit merely a point of departure: Students look behind the masks presented by consumer goods and wonder about the lives of those who make them.

Our students begin their day putting on shirts and blouses made in Honduras and shoes made in China. They drive to school in vehicles powered by oil from Colombia and Saudi Arabia. They snack on fruit from Mexico.

Woven into this fabric of interconnectedness are ethical choices that teachers need to help students consider. We need to prompt them to ask hard questions about who benefits and who suffers from globalization, and to wonder about their responsibilities. Today, a critical global literacy is a basic skill. ✓

Bill Bigelow teaches at Franklin High School in Portland, Oregon. He is an editor of the national education journal Rethinking Schools. For more on Rethinking Globalization, e-mail bbpdx@aol.com or see www.rethinkingschools.org.



John Gress

Similar choices confront teachers today. Are we content to present students with Important Facts or do we engage students in examining their connections to burning issues: global warming, the AIDS epidemic, child labor, religious fundamentalism, growing inequality?

Bob Peterson, a fifth-grade teacher in Milwaukee, and I edited *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World* for educators who want students to explore their relationships with people and issues around the world—and to consider how to make the world a better place.

Critical global literacy should demystify aspects of the global economy. I begin one activity described in the book by appointing a class leader—let's call him Mark. As other students look on, I lend Mark \$5—"But don't worry, you'll never have to pay it back." I give Mark a pass to wander the halls and spend his money (well, my money) on candy or pop or anything his heart desires.

My aim is to introduce students to the Third World debt crisis, in which wealthy elites, often military dictators, borrowed enormous sums from Western banks, and—with the banks' encouragement—saddled their people with debts that could never be repaid.

We follow the "Gimme back my money" exercise by exploring the ecological dimension of the debt crisis, as poor countries auction off their resources to make payments. We examine the "structural adjustment policies" demanded by the International Monetary Fund when poor countries try to renegotiate their debts. Structural adjustment is a chiropractic-sounding name for draconian cuts in health, education, and wages, and privatization of government services like water systems that have left many of the world's poor worse off than ever.

A critical global literacy should also encourage students to consider how their consumption of commodities connects them to people around the world. I put a soccer ball

Every so often a member will request another copy of *NEA Today* to replace a damaged issue.

Last month, for example, a member from New York sent us her issue. Some pages of her copy were out of sequence.

This happens very infrequently, but to understand why it might happen at all, it helps to know a little bit of background about the printing, binding, and mailing processes employed to produce *NEA Today*.

Copies of *NEA Today* are printed by high-speed presses on paper that comes off



Bill Fischer
editor

press in continuous rolls in forms (groups) of 16, 16, and 20 pages, for a 52-page issue.

As the pages move off press, they're trimmed to final specifications before they move to the bindery line where they're assembled and stitched (stapled) prior to mailing. The member's out of sequence issue probably happened at this stage of the process.

Press, binding, and mailing personnel are always alert to any problems that may occur as the magazine moves through all production phases. And they're equipped with the latest technology to make sure each issue is complete and completely readable.

The bindery lines, for example, have electronic eyes spaced every few feet to ensure that each of the 2.6 million magazines has the correct number and sequence of pages. Every so often issues are pulled from the binding process (as they are during printing) and handchecked as the magazines proceed to the mailing stage where they are bagged and tagged for delivery to the post office.

Our goal: to make sure that a good, clean copy of each issue of *NEA Today* reaches you on time, every time. If for some reason your issue is incomplete or damaged, let us know (see page 3 for contact information). We'd be happy to replace it.

Bill Fischer

Book Talk!

Reading books is one thing. Now, with passion, skill, and a little bit of chutzpah, educators are getting kids to *talk* about them—like grown-ups do.

Ah, to wallow in the magic of a good book. Unearth its meaning. Hold it to the heart. Toot about it. It's one of the simple pleasures many educators live for—the gift, too, they long to pass on to their students.

Yet in many classrooms, it's not always easy to make reading for kids a pathway to such joy, or some wondrous exercise in self-discovery, or even the great social event many experts say it can be. Testing demands, instruction mandates, overcrowded classes, resource shortfalls—all can short-circuit teacher creativity and stymie student chatter.

But across the country, NEA members are showing that with passion and a bit of will, reading can be taught successfully and, at the same time, celebrated—playfully, cheerfully, and with rigor. Through such innovation as student-led reading circles, in-class book clubs, author studies and “literary cafés,” members are turning reading into a social treat for their students—all the while making it a tool for self-exploration, for honing writing and thinking skills, for pondering social issues, indeed, for developing a love of literature for the joy of it.

Driving this train is not simply great teaching, but the books themselves. “We’ve never been in an age where there are such rich children’s books—they’ve just never been better,” says Susan Hepler, a children’s literary consultant and co-author of the forthcoming book, *Books Your Kids Will Talk About!* State-of-the-art printing techniques, luscious art commingling with text, nontraditional styles—this is all part of it. But, says Maria Salvadore, the book’s co-author, it’s also the ideas. “There’s never been such diversity and range of themes—blended families, social activism—or even such authentic voices,” she says. “For the first time, for example, we have a book that portrays, in a high-quality way, a situation where the father is incarcerated. When you think about it, that’s pretty amazing.”

(What book is that? See page 10 for this and other chat-inspiring offerings in a new title from the NEA Professional Library.)

Given this current trove of literary treasures, educators are being inspired to buck more traditional ways of engaging their kids



around books. For them, it's no longer good enough to simply quiz kids on what a book is "about" or who its main characters are. Rather, "It's giving kids a chance to talk to each other the way mature adults talk about books," says Barbara Kapinus, NEA's reading specialist.

"You wouldn't, for instance, pick up *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, a book about Black children in the South, and ask kids, 'What's the main idea?'" she says. "You'd ask, 'Who are these people? What are they struggling with? What does it remind you of?' It's about giving them a chance to really interact with the text and respond to it"—and then, through discussion with each other, sift through and turn over what is revealed.

Kapinus grants that teachers must develop know-how to successfully mold thoughtful, active readers this way, but many educators are doing it—and seeing results.

CREATING A HAVEN

Take Debbi Tehrani, a fifth-grade teacher at Jones Lane Elementary School in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Tehrani readily admits to doing things with, well, zeal. Collecting 3,000 children's books on her own during her 13 years of teaching, then stuffing them into every nook and cranny of her classroom is just one of them. "I just love to read and really want my kids to share that love," she says. "When you surround kids with books, they just can't help getting into them. They talk about them all the time."

But in Tehrani's classroom there's a method to the madness. In addition to reading aloud to her kids every day—"It builds such a sense of community and creates a closeness to your students"—she holds a daily "reading workshop." She starts each workshop with a mini-lesson—about everything from how to choose a book and comprehend better to how to conduct a good discussion (watch the eye contact, respond politely, etc.). Then once a week students write a letter to her about a book they've chosen. And she writes back, to express excitement about their discovery or to suggest they try a related book or author.

Labor intensive, yes. "But a lot of times in those letters they make a connection between what they're reading and what I'm reading to them—or what's happening in their lives," says Tehrani.

And that's just the start. The students also craft personal "reading profiles"—revealing which genres they like, whether they're prone to giving away surprise endings, how fast they read.

"I try to get them to know themselves as

Students in Debbi Tehrani's fifth-grade class at Jones Lane Elementary School get to choose from thousands of books Tehrani has collected over the years. They then talk about them in classroom book clubs, and Tehrani tapes and evaluates the discussions.

Photos by Daniel Peck/Peck Studios



readers, because really, many don't," Tehrani says. They carefully review each other's profiles and Tehrani then organizes them into "book clubs" based on similar reading habits. Each group meets once or twice a week, plans what and how much they will read, then holds discussions, which Tehrani tapes and evaluates. "They just love it," she says. "They feel it's a grown-up thing, and they're really sharing ideas enthusiastically and using the strategies we've talked about. It's just opened up a whole new world to them."

MAKING THE AUTHOR CONNECTION

Hundreds of miles away in rural Holly, Michigan, Kathy Highfield says she's knows the joy precisely. She, too, uses book clubs with her third and fourth graders at Rose Pioneer Elementary School—but with some added twists. She often focuses, for example, on a particular author to buttress her yearlong literacy theme, "Our Story Lives." For three years her literary guru of choice has been the popular Michigan-based author Patricia Polacco—mostly because her books are autobiographical. "They have real-life issues and are very meaty—and the more books of hers you read, the more you get a sense of her as a person."

After going through a book or two, Highfield says, the kids begin making connections to their own families and it spurs lively talk—even a desire to write. "They think about their own lives—'I was teased once. Oh, I can write about that'—and so it helps them as authors, too." Character and story development, how to use an illustration—all that, she says, become fodder for discussion and experimentation. And the results are often startling.

"When newer teachers stop in my class to see us do book clubs," she says, "they're always amazed at how deep these students can go in their thinking and discussion. And I think it's because we really underestimate how powerful conversation is for kids....They're taking ownership for their learning. They're really connecting to books and looking at them as more than something to get through. They're actually getting lost in them and then are talking to each other at lunch about them. It's remarkable."

NOT THE SAME OL' BOOK REVIEW

Tammy Dorsten, a fifth-grade teacher at Kennesaw Elementary School in Cobb County, Georgia, takes yet another approach. Instead of the classic book report, she assigns fun, "sometimes weird," interactive projects to spark talk. So far her kids have dressed up like the subject of a biography they've read, then "frozen" themselves in the school library to present together, as in a wax museum. When other students and other teachers wander through and turn them "on," they begin to talk in the first person about their life and times and discoveries, based on the book.

For other books, Dorsten has directed students to turn themselves into news reporters who, with camcorder rolling, conduct "in setting" interviews with another student they've prepped about their book. ("This is Johnny



Debbi Tehrani believes that reading aloud to her fifth graders is vital. "It builds such a sense of community and creates a closeness to the students," she says.

Smith reporting from the school library, here with the library dragon...").

They've also used cereal boxes to design a cover for a book they've read, complete with summaries and quotes and all the hype about its "real" meaning. They've recorded self-made commercials to convince their class of the value of a book they've read. And because she incorporates writing so intimately into everything her students do, "they read even more because they're now interested in finding how other authors have described something or used alliteration."

Like Tehrani, Dorsten reads aloud frequently, tapping interesting books to supplement virtually every subject. "I can use any book as a springboard into any issue I want to talk about....I'm a white teacher, but if I walk into a mostly Black classroom and ask why we have racism,

or why our society is the way it is," Dorsten says, "I'm not going to get a whole lot from a bunch of a nine-year-olds. But when I open the book, they relate to a character and all kinds of issues and ideas get raised." And those are the moments she says become magical because through discussion her kids "begin to think outside the box." They start wondering, "How does this come back to me?" And that's what I want." ✓

—Marilyn Milloy

Resources

■ NEA Success in Reading series, by the NEA Professional Library. For details, visit www.nea.org/books, or call 800/229-4200.

■ Visit www.nea.org/reading to get resources, ideas, research, and news related to reading instruction.

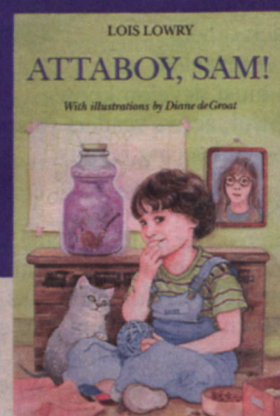
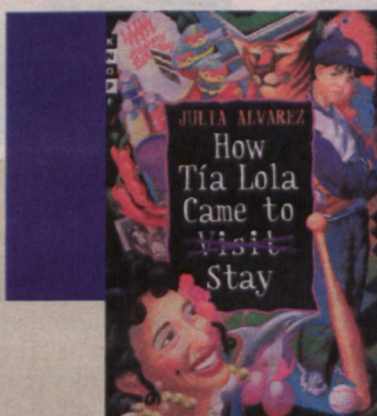
Books Your Kids Will Talk About!

Part of what makes a great book fun for adults is talking about it. Kids are no different. And, in addition to the fun factor, talking about books is a powerful tool for learning. So how can you connect kids with books that will inspire and motivate them? *Books Your Kids Will Talk About!*, a new offering from the NEA Professional Library, helps educators and parents successfully navigate the ever-expanding universe of children's books. Authors Susan Hepler and Maria Salvadore have pooled their considerable expertise in the field of children's literature to create an annotated list of thought-provoking books guaranteed to inspire discussion among young people.

The publication's comprehensive booklists are organized around themes that are especially germane to a child's world: making friends, going to school, living in a family, growing up, acting as catalysts for change, and other important topics. Each chapter begins with a brief discussion of the theme and an inspiring classroom anecdote or author interview. There's also a section on ways in which the books can be integrated into your curriculum. *Books!* aspires to create a community of book lovers by fostering active discussion and self-exploration among young readers.

Books Your Kids Will Talk About! will be available from the NEA Professional Library this April. Here's a preview of some of the book's selections. Visit www.nea.org/books for more.

P = Primary (Kindergarten-Grade 3)
I = Intermediate (Grades 3-4)
U = Upper (Grades 4-6)



Books About Living in a Family

Attaboy, Sam! By Lois Lowry. Illustrated by Diane deGroat. Houghton Mifflin. (Series) (I, U). This funny novel presents a preschooler with a problem: What to give his mother for her birthday? He decides to mix all of her favorite scents in one bottle and let it ripen in his closet. Many families have celebrations that feature surprises. What makes a celebration memorable? How do different families celebrate special events? The "Sam" series also features his big sister Anastasia, who has her own series as well.

Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard. Illustrated by James Ransome. Clarion. (P, I). Using the device of hats to call up memories, a beloved great-great-aunt shares her stories with two girls, thus passing along family tales and traditions. It's a good invitation to talk about treasures—real or remembered; and "Treasures" would make a good labeled classroom display or book of writings.

Emma's Yucky Brother by Jean Little. Illustrated by Jennifer Plecas. HarperCollins. (P, I). Emma is excited when her family adopts four-year-old Max, but he's not nearly as cute

or as little as he was in his pictures. The transitions are difficult for everyone as Max moves from foster care into a permanent home—and for Emma, who is no longer the only child in the family. This short, expressively illustrated chapter book provides a conduit into many discussable topics, such as adoption and a child's conflicting feelings when a new sibling comes into the house.

Getting Through Thursday by Melrose Cooper. Illustrated by Neka Bennett. Lee & Low. (P). Even though Andre's mother promised a celebration if he achieved honor roll status, he pouts because he has to wait until payday. But the family imaginatively throws him a dress rehearsal party and Andre realizes how much they care about him. Waiting, promises deferred, or things we think we need but can't have are some very real challenges children deal with.

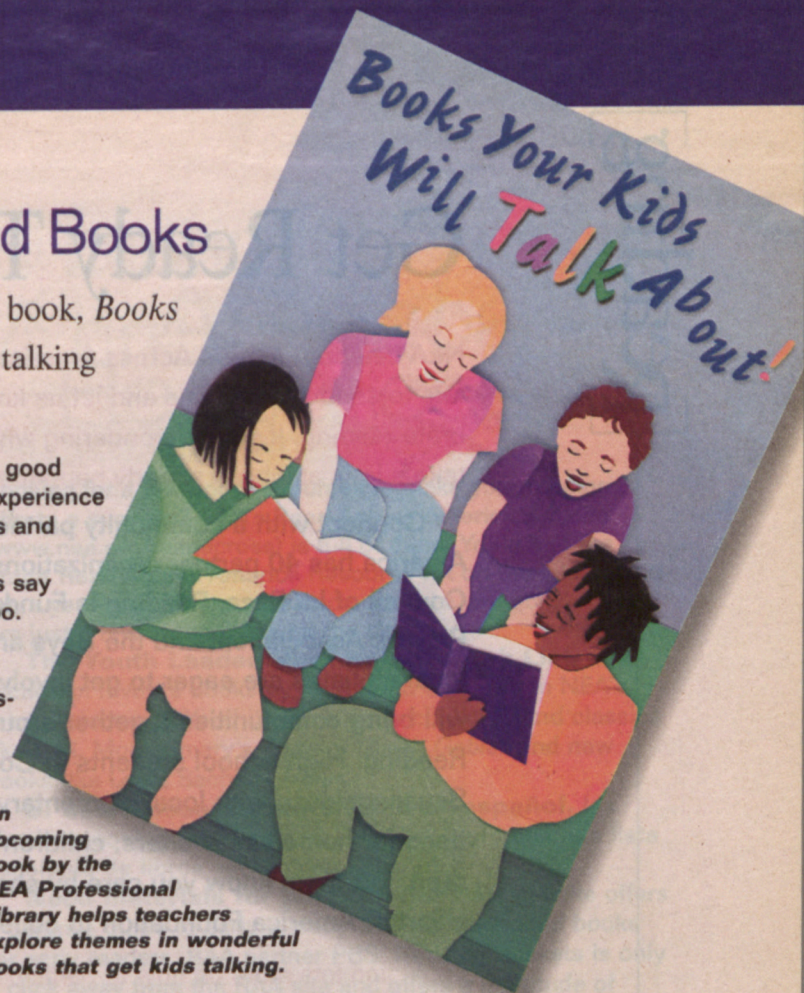
How Tía Lola Came to Visit/Stay by Julia Alvarez. Knopf. (U). When Tía Lola moves from the Dominican Republic to Vermont to help out, Miguel is mortified by her flamboyant character and her willingness to make friends with anyone. Miguel is still smarting from his parents' divorce, moving to a different community, and being different from neighbors and schoolmates. The book invites readers to talk about new situations and how families come through them.

Five Ways To Stir Up a "Buzz" Around Books

Maria Salvadore and Susan Hepler, co-authors of the upcoming NEA book, *Books Your Kids Will Talk About!*, say it's possible to get kids thinking and talking about books energetically.

- Read aloud in class. No matter how old, kids love the human voice, the drama of a good story well told. "It's hugely motivating," says Salvadore. "You're providing a shared experience between everybody in that room—and you're also able to stop and pick up on themes and ideas that fit into other curricula areas." Kids can't help but want to read more.
- Let kids help organize the class library, and recommend books to read. Letting kids say what they think, says Hepler, stirs the interest of other kids, and helps the teacher, too. "You're multiplying your own efforts by 30."
- Introduce books to students that have similar themes but are explored differently, then urge them to talk together about the common strains. It helps them connect messages and ideas on their own—even those not stated—which in turn develops critical thinking skills. "They learn the text and the subtext," says Salvadore.
- Get kids to write about what they read—in journals, response logs, in letters to each other, in essays—and urge they relate the messages to their lives. "It's no secret that the more you write, the better you read," says Hepler. And, of course, the better the read, the more you want to read.
- Involve the parents, perhaps by encouraging parent/kid book clubs. Using books as a "jumping off point for shared experiences" between kids and their guardians can excite not just the children, but the adults, too, says Salvadore.

An upcoming book by the NEA Professional Library helps teachers explore themes in wonderful books that get kids talking.



Visiting Day by Jacqueline Woodson. Illustrated by James Ransome. Scholastic. (P, I). The narrator and her grandmother prepare for a bus trip to see the girl's father, who is "doing a little time." Dad, a handsome man in khaki, also eagerly anticipates his daughter's visit. Only illustrations denote that he is actually incarcerated. The richly colored illustrations and the straightforward text focus on the joyful meeting and hoped-for eventual reunion, not the cause of the separation, and encourage discussion of the difficulty of being apart from a loved one.

The "Yang Family" Series by Lensey Namioka. Illustrated by Kees de Kieffe. Little Brown. (Series) (I, U). Four separate novels, each from a different family member's perspective, show how the variously talented Chinese-American siblings find their way in a new culture. Issues include the importance of music, helping parents understand the younger generation's concerns and desires, making friends, and earning money.

Books that Inspire Kids to Change Their World

Edwina Victorious by Susan Bonners. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (U). When Edwina discovers her great-grandaunt Edwina's feisty let-

ters to the editor, it gives her courage to write to the mayor about a neglected neighborhood playground and other civic blights. But young Edwina is too shy to write in her own voice and adopts instead that of the aunt with mixed consequences. This book introduces the concept of community activism, writing letters about matters that need changing, and learning to speak up.

Hoot by Carl Hiaasen. Knopf. (U). Having moved, Roy Eberhardt is once again the new kid, tormented by the school bully and unhappy in his new home. However, Roy comes to love living in southwest Florida, where he manages to foil big business, garner support for endangered owls, and make friends in his new school. Quirky characters, exaggeration, and middle school humor are used to focus on one child's amazing impact on the world around him.

Seed Folk by Paul Fleischman. HarperCollins. (U). Hope sprouts from seeds planted by a grieving girl in her blighted urban neighborhood. One by one, others in the community see the growth and contribute to it, creating a more beautiful and promising place. This slim novel, told from various points of view, is shaped by the distinct, individual voices of those who fashion the garden and change their community.

Silver Packages: An Appalachian Christmas Story by Cynthia Rylant. Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet. Orchard. (I). Near an Appalachian mining town, Frankie waits each year by the train tracks for the annual Christmas train from which a present is tossed. He hopes for a play doctor's kit that never arrives, but as an adult doctor, he returns to work in the community that raised him. This story is perfect for talking about ways we can give back to the people and

places that influence who we become. *Silver Packages* can also be found in Rylant's short story collection, *Children of Christmas*.

Something Beautiful by Sharon Dennis Wyeth. Illustrated by Chris K. Soentpiet. Doubleday. (P). Depressed by the negative graffiti on her apartment building, the homeless person sleeping on the sidewalk, and the debris cluttering a vacant lot, a little girl searches for something beautiful in her life. As she talks to people in her neighborhood, she gathers enough goodwill to think of something she can do to make her world more beautiful. The little girl's encounters with the people in her daily life—her teacher, the waitress at the coffee shop, the corner grocer, and her mother—help broaden her notion of just what is "beautiful."

Tomás and the Library Lady by Pat Mora. Illustrated by Raul Colón. Knopf. (P, I). A child of a migrant farm family is changed forever by his experiences at a library and his fleeting summer friendship with the librarian. The book is based on a true incident from the life of Mexican-American writer Tomás Rivera, who journeyed from working as a laborer to becoming a university chancellor. How can books and reading change a person? What books could be influential in our lives?

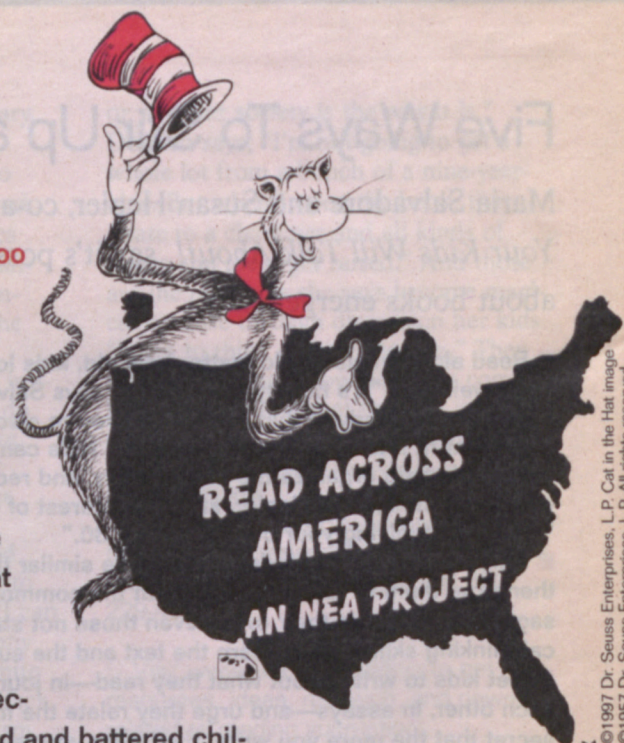
Yo! Yes? by Chris Raschka. Orchard Books. (P, I). Something seemingly as simple as saying hello to another kid can cause big changes in a child's life. One-syllable words in emotive typeface integrated with expressive line drawings effectively use the form of the book to depict two boys who are changed by a bold YO! Notice how the illustrations place the two boys on opposite sides of the book's spine to mirror the wary characters' gradual friendship until they're finally on the same page at the end of the book.

Get Ready To Read!

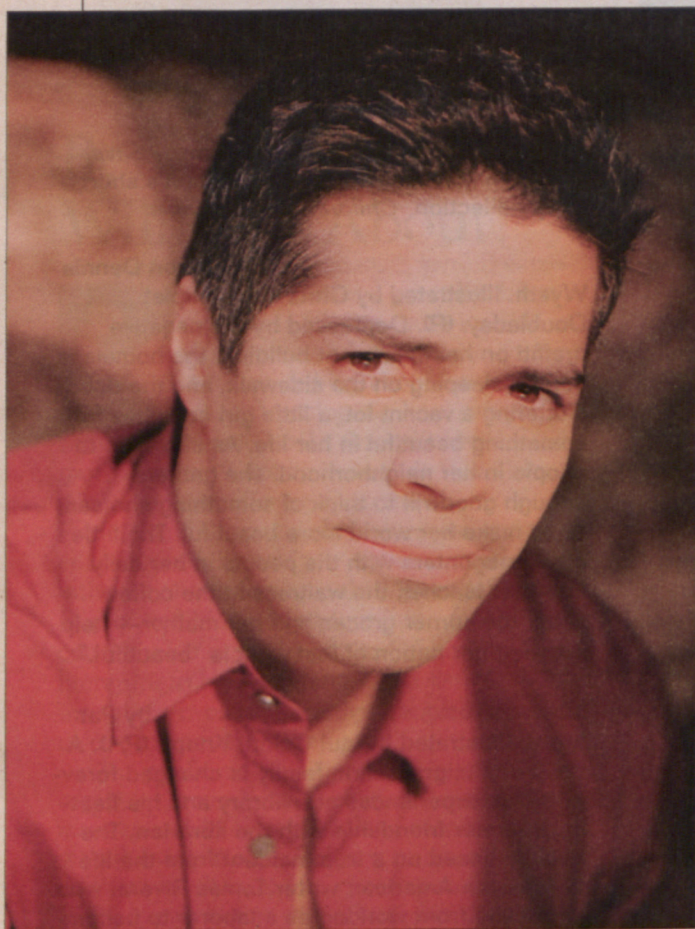
NEA celebrates Read Across America March 3 this year, and it's not too late to send your pledge and let us know what you're doing to celebrate reading. If you're wondering what you can do to get involved, take a look at what's already happening around the country.

♥ Connect with a community partner. NEA's Read Across America has 40 partner organizations, including the National Council of La Raza, Reading is Fundamental, the National Football Players Association, and the Boys and Girls Club of America, whose local affiliates are eager to get involved. Create a reading project that will bring communities together around books. ♥ Get wild about Reading. High school students in Connecticut created their own Seussapalooza with local elementary students. ♥ Set up book collections for homeless shelters, children's hospitals, or homes for abused and battered children. Let them know you care by sharing books. NEA's Read Across America is teaming up with Heart of America Foundation to collect books for children in need.

You'll find lots more on how to participate in NEA's Read Across America on our website. Go to www.nea.org/readacross.



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Read Across America co-chair Esai Morales

Reading is important because it takes words and images and symbols and formulates them into ideas and thoughts in your own head.

—Esai Morales

'Reading exercised the muscles of my imagination.'

Read Across America co-chair **Esai Morales** describes himself as an "actorvist," who combines art and activism to build bridges of understanding. Looking at his strong union and education background, it's easy to see why. Morales talked with Anita Merina of NEA's Read Across America campaign about his labor background and his zeal for arts education and literacy.

What are your union roots?

My mother was an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Union, a regular Norma Rae. Her union work was one of the inspirations for my own activism. She taught me that when you go someplace, you leave it better than you found it.

What about your own union roles?

I'm a long-time member of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG). Most people associate SAG with famous names, but we also represent actors who don't make big money; they rely on us to protect their rights and articulate their needs.

I'm on the board of directors for SAG and the SAG Foundation, the charitable arm of our organization. The SAG Foundation has a terrific literacy program called BookPALS (Performing Artists for Literacy in Schools) that sends actors to read in schools that don't have many resources. The children love it, and so do the actors.

Tell us about the Hispanic Foundation for the Arts.

The Foundation's mission is to improve the opportunity and image of Hispanics in front of as well as behind the camera. As founders, Jimmy Smits, Sonia Braga, and I felt we needed to address the serious lack of representation of Hispanics in the media today. In a world where the media is the message, we are left out too often. Through the foundation, we create opportunities with scholarships and other programs. And we take a public look at how Hispanics are portrayed.

By putting more Latinos on television, you increase the chance of portraying the diversity of our people. By putting more Latinos on screen that are not just the old cliché, we're helping the evolution of our media image.

This is your second year with NEA's Read Across America. Why get involved?

As a child, reading was a way for me to exercise the muscles of my imagination. There was no limit to what worlds reading could bring to me. Getting involved with NEA's effort to do the same for millions of children was easy.

Why is reading important?

Because reading takes words and images and symbols and formulates them into ideas and thoughts in your own head. It exercises the reader's mind, and it's a cheap form of travel!

Were you read to as a child?

My mother, as well as different aunts and uncles, read to me. I enjoyed *Great Earth* by Pearl S. Buck, Dr. Seuss, the Curious George books, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and so many others I can't recall. Later on, I graduated to books like Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* and Gabriel García Márquez's *100 Years of Solitude*.

On Diversity and Dr. Seuss

Actress **Ming-Na**, known for her portrayal of Dr. Jing-Mei (Deb) Chen on NBC's *ER*, will co-chair this year's Read Across America campaign. The actress, who moved from China to New York when she was four years old, first attracted attention with her performance in *The Joy Luck Club*. Ming-Na spoke with *NEA Today's* Kristen Loschert about the role reading plays in her career.

Why did you want to co-chair NEA's Read Across America?

Well, I am a new mom, first of all, and I love reading to my daughter. I've always been an advocate of reading to children, and it's a great program that encourages kids to read.

Do publishers offer enough diversity in the images portrayed in children's books?

I think more so now than when I was a kid, that's for sure. There's definitely a greater variety to choose from.

Do you have any favorite authors or books?

When I was a kid, I enjoyed Dr. Seuss, which I've passed on to my daughter. I read her *The Cat in the Hat* all the time. For myself, it runs the gamut from the Harry Potter books to science fiction.

Read Across America co-chair Ming-Na and friends



How has your love of reading helped you as an actor?

Acting is all about words. No matter how wonderful an actor might be, if it weren't for the written words there's really not much we can do. I've been trained as a theater actress to respect the written word.

Tell me a little bit about the goals of your music company, Innovazian.

Being Chinese-American, I think it's important to have diversity in all areas. My husband and I both felt that there was absolutely no diversity as far as having Asians represented in the music business. So that was our actual motivation—to produce this Asian-American boy band called AT LAST. Once again, it's about communicating through words, and this is adding music to words, which is probably one of the most powerful forms of communication because it can touch you on so many levels.

What project in your career are you most proud of?

The Joy Luck Club, without a doubt. When I read that book in college, it was the first time I felt like I was reading a book that related to who I was and the kind of upbringing I had as an Asian-American. I'm more recognized for that

Read Across America Resources

Looking for a few good resources to make your reading efforts a success? NEA's Read Across America website (www.nea.org/readacross) is full of them. You'll find the entire Read Across America Resource Kit on the site, including a year-round literacy calendar to keep you going. Here are just a few of the gems on the site:

The Youth Leaders for Literacy Book List, a collection of favorite books by teens who took part in NEA's joint project with Youth Service America. You'll find classics like L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and new books like Louis Sachar's *Holes*.

Si usted necesita materiales en español, los puede encontrar en el sitio de internet, junto con una lista excelente de libros escritos en español.

Need materials for parents? The RAA website offers a parent's guide to early literacy and recommended books for early readers. RAA partner PBS' Reading Rockets is only a click away from the RAA site and offers a multitude of reading tips, author interviews, and much more. Go to www.readingrockets.org.

project than anything else, and that means the movie really connected with the audience.

Do television and film producers do enough to portray positive images of Asian-Americans?

I think they try. My show, *ER*, is definitely one of the more diverse ones. It's slow in coming, but it is happening. When you start to see it in commercials, then you'll start seeing it in the television shows and movies.

Is there any final message about reading you'd like to share?

I really encourage parents and teachers not to make reading a chore. If you make reading fun and introduce children to it, it opens up such an incredible world for them.

When I was right out of college, I volunteered with a literacy program for adults. There were so many adults who tried to hide the fact that they couldn't read. Then they would come to this volunteer program and work one-on-one with a tutor. I could see their faces light up when they finally were able to read their first sentence. I was always so proud of being part of that program.

That's why I wanted to be involved with Read Across. I think reading is an incredible experience. It's a skill that every human being deserves to have. ✓

I really encourage parents and teachers not to make reading a chore.

—Ming-Na

Bob Riba, Jr.

Dedicated Educators, Dead-End Management

Spending cuts and poor leadership by Edison Schools, Inc. compound the problems of a struggling Pennsylvania district.



These Chester Upland teachers have a tough job, but they're highly motivated. From left are Margo Stokes, Kate O'Brien, Mildred McLaughlin, Phyllis Rohrmayer, Norvell Queen, Denise Johnson, Harriet Klein, Marlene Daniels, and George Walker.

Photos by Stacy Edmonds

The first time your state legislators ooh and aah over the idea of for-profit school management, suggest a study tour of Pennsylvania's 5,300-student Chester Upland district, where Edison Schools, Inc.—the nation's "leading private manager of public schools"—is shaping the best possible arguments *against* privatization.

NEA state and local affiliate officials charge that Edison, which has run nine of this high-poverty district's 10 public schools since 2000, is generating huge problems through spending cutbacks and poor educational leadership.

Quite simply, "we believe that dur-

ing Edison's management of Chester Upland, the environment for teaching and learning has deteriorated, not improved," says Gloria Zoranski, presi-

"We believe that during Edison's management of our schools, the environment for teaching and learning has deteriorated."

—Gloria Zoranski,
President, Chester Upland Education Association

dent of the 481-member Chester Upland Education Association (CUEA).

Edison is struggling financially—its share price plunged from a high of \$38 in 2001 to \$1.55 at the beginning of December. And Thomas Persing, chair of a state-appointed control board overseeing Chester Upland, recently acknowledged in an education journal that Edison's "financial difficulties," along with Securities and Exchange Commission investigations, lawsuits by investors, and other adverse developments, "have compounded Edison's problems and increased our concern about our relationship with Edison."

Yet the state of Pennsylvania, which directly controls Chester Upland and 11 other struggling districts under its "Education Empowerment Act," hasn't paid attention. Last autumn, the Chester Upland control board doubled the value of its existing contract with Edison, to more than \$4 million this school year, while a city/state control board handed Edison a five-year, \$60 million contract to run 20 "low-performing" Philadelphia schools.

For all its troubles, Edison clearly has friends among privatizers in public office—it manages public schools in 24 states—and strong prospects under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

ESEA, which permits private management of public schools that fail to make "adequate yearly progress" for five consecutive years, offers a "tremendous opportunity for Edison to leverage its experience and expertise on behalf of districts and states seeking solutions," Edison executive Jim Howland recently gushed to a business reporter.

Obstacles to Achievement

It will be mighty hard, however, to leverage *anything* from the Chester

Upland experience. In November, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that student scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test declined in nine Chester Upland schools, "with the best performance in the district at Toby Farms Elementary, the one [school] not run by Edison."

Factors behind Chester Upland's sinking scores include:

■ **A breakdown in student discipline.** When Edison assumed control of Chester Upland, it saved money by closing the district's grade 7-12 alternative school, leaving schools no option other than suspensions—and accepting students straight out of incarceration.

Worse, the heads of school "leadership teams" must both teach class and handle the discipline problems of kids from tough urban neighborhoods.

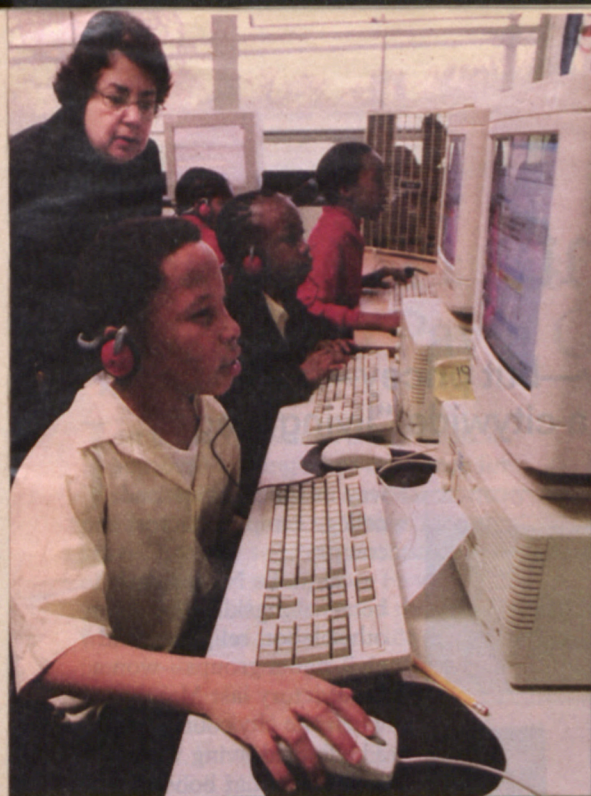
[YOUR DUES DID IT]

ESEA Regs Back Rights of Educators, Special-Needs Kids

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has released final regulations for Subpart A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—covering everything from school accountability to educator qualifications—and incorporated at least some recommendations made by NEA on ED's initial draft. Just two victories:

- ED dropped a proposal that would have curtailed educator rights in the school improvement process. Now, any sanctions imposed on a school that displays a lack of "adequate yearly progress" must not reduce the rights or remedies of employees under federal, state, or local law or collective bargaining agreements.

- Under the final Title I regulations, states must ensure that at least some "supplemental service providers" working with schools under improvement plans can fully serve both students with disabilities and limited English-proficient students. For more details on these regulations, see the March issue of *NEA Today*.



Chester Upland teachers improvise to meet students' needs. Language arts teacher Phyllis Rohrmayer obtained 30 donated computers, wired them up, and linked them to the Internet.

CUEA President Zoranski, a business teacher at Chester High School, charges that "four schools are out of control" and that the district's security force is poorly staffed and under-trained—leading to unchecked gang activity and assaults on students and teachers.

■ **Cutbacks in staff, programs, and supplies.** CUEA has successfully fought teacher layoffs but has been unable to stop Edison from firing 15 technical support staffers and more than 100 paraeducators—or from gutting middle school career, industrial arts, and home economics programs.

On top of these cutbacks, teachers report shortages of everything from copier paper to instructional materials, forcing them to improvise and spend more out of pocket. "This year, several schools opened their doors without textbooks," Zoranski points out, "and Columbus, our largest elementary, opened without any teaching materials."

Edison's penny pinching extends even to teacher technology—the company has not fulfilled its promise to issue a laptop computer to every Chester Upland teacher—and to site-level purchasing. "Until last year, we had a business support manager in every school to order supplies," notes Zoranski. "Now those positions are gone. In September and October, teachers had no direction to get what they needed for class. Blame goes back and forth and nothing gets to the solution stage."

Another reason supply decisions are in short supply: Edison gives Chester Upland principals bonuses that hinge on both student performance and how much is *not* spent out of a school's budget.

A Bright Spot: Teacher Dedication

Edison may not show respect for Chester Upland teachers, but the district's new superintendent does. "I firmly believe that quality staff is still present today in our district," Dr. Dexter Davis declared in his 2002-03 school opening address. "It will be my

responsibility to provide the administrators and teachers with the support and materials to get the job done."

"Dr. Davis gives it his best shot, and he's been willing to work with the Association," notes Zoranski. "The minute he became superintendent, he said he wanted to communicate with us and never wanted to stop."

The superintendent knows dedication when he sees it. In the face of indiscipline and the "hardships of where these children come from," an amazing number of Chester Upland teachers "still come to work each day and spend their own money on the kids," stresses the CUEA president.

"They're highly motivated, even though it's a tough place to work."

"Our teachers put up with verbal abuse from students and lack of support from Edison administrators and still manage to teach, to get students to learn," Zoranski concludes. "They're excited about presenting new lessons and they love passing knowledge on to students." ✓

—Dave Winans

CUEA President Gloria Zoranski can be contacted at Glo6@hotmail.com.

Five Ways To Improve Chester Upland Schools

What will it take to turn around Pennsylvania's struggling Chester Upland school district? A checklist from folks on the front lines:

1. Improved security. The starting point: more and better-trained security officers.

2. More parent involvement. "All stakeholders of the district must be actively involved to change the educational climate of our district," said Chester Upland Superintendent Dexter Davis in his 2002-03 school opening address.

3. A student anger management program. "We have to start at an early age," stresses Chester Upland Education Association President Gloria Zoranski. "Violence is even on the rise at the elementary level."

4. Smarter state oversight. At press time, the "board of control" overseeing Chester Upland included just one educator and—believe it or not—the superintendent of the 1,100-inmate State Correctional Institution at Chester. The state "needs to get rid of Edison Schools, Inc. and put that money directly into Chester Upland classrooms," says Pennsylvania State Education Association staffer Bob Brown.

5. A voice for educators. There must be a school-by-school assessment, involving front-line staff, of how to improve teaching and learning in Chester Upland. Key elements are already there: Kids who want to learn and teachers who delight in teaching them.

—D.W.

[DOER'S PROFILE]

'Oh, You're The Teacher!'

I'm a Democrat, but I had support from Democrats and Republicans in my successful campaign for state representative. It's really important to talk about the issues and to work in a nonpartisan way to get pro-public education candidates elected to office.

Name and profession: Shelley Vana, 14-year high school biology teacher.

Positions: Full-time release president of the 6,700-member Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association and newly elected member of the Florida House of Representatives.

How I got elected: This was a very tight race, and I think support from educators made a difference. I've never seen more people working together on a campaign—teachers, ESPs, and administrators.

I was endorsed by organizations such as the Florida Education Association, the state AFL-CIO, police and firefighter unions, and a human rights coalition.

I went door to door every night, and there was always an educator with me. People

would say to me, "You're the teacher!" People really do respect teachers; we mean a lot to them.

Issues voters talked about:

Everybody, regardless of age, asked me about the same two things: health care and education. Seniors were concerned that they can't afford prescription drugs, and working people with families said they're hard-pressed to afford rising insurance costs. When it came to education, people were concerned about Florida's high class sizes and the state's tremendous emphasis on the FCAT student test and how those test results are being used.

What I'll be talking about in Tallahassee: I'll represent all the voters of House District 85 and education is one of my top priorities. It's only logical that a teacher's viewpoint be heard in Tallahassee on decisions that affect children and education.

The people who elected me said they want to prioritize spending, and I think it should be a priority to educate people and ensure they have adequate health care.

A little advice: Before running for public office, talk to somebody who has done this before. This isn't for the fainthearted—it challenges every part of you. As a local union president, I already knew what it's like to be under pressure and in the public eye. You have to state positions, know where you want to go, and have people around you who tell you when you're wrong.

Shelley Vana can be contacted at shelley.vana@floridaea.org



D.J. McPherson

Let Us Serve You in Santa Fe!

Many NEA members moonlight to survive in lovely—but pricey—Santa Fe, New Mexico. That's why they've joined a drive for a citywide "living wage."



Instructional assistant Andrea Harvey, here serving retired ESP Bernadette L. Ortega at a Santa Fe restaurant, says, "Sometimes I feel like I'm burning out working two jobs."

Photos by Neil Jacobs

Ah—Santa Fe! "A city whose beautiful, brown adobe architecture blends with the high desert landscape...one of America's great art and culinary capitals," purrs the Santa Fe Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Absolutely true. And when you visit this splendid destination, you'll encounter a sort of welcoming committee of fellow NEA members, ready to serve you in hotels, restaurants, stores, museums, and performing arts centers.

Ask these teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) why they work these second and third jobs—when they really ought to be relaxing, taking a course, or helping their own kids with homework—and you'll learn about an aspect of Santa Fe that doesn't appear in the tourist brochures. The city's cost of living is 18 percent above the national average, and its workers earn approximately 23 percent less than the national average.

While affluent

outsiders are snapping up second homes in Santa Fe, many locals can only dream about buying a first house there (median home price: \$268,000). Rents are ridiculous (\$700 to start for a one-bedroom), gas is ghastly (15 cents a gallon higher than in Albuquerque), and starting pay is painful (\$10,922 for an instructional assistant and \$26,414 for a teacher with a Bachelor of Arts).

No surprise, then, that NEA-New Mexico and its Santa Fe affiliate have joined a thriving labor/community drive for a "living wage," sufficient to support a family without outside employment, in the city of arts and good eating. This is just one of 77 living wage campaigns currently under-

officials spoke loudly on behalf of all hard-pressed salary earners.

Any new ordinance won't directly affect school district minimums, acknowledges Roundtable member Pat Chavez, an NEA-New Mexico UniServ consultant, but it "would create competition" in the local labor market and give NEA-Santa Fe bargaining leverage to raise sub-living wages on school campuses. And, of course, it would benefit educators who moonlight across the private sector. ✓

—By Dave Winans,
with contributions from John O'Neil

For more on the living wage movement, go to www.livingwagecampaign.org.

"We are part of the 'ambiance' of Santa Fe. We are the waiters, the bartenders, and the people who work at the opera and in the shops during peak seasons."

—Santa Fe ESP leader Bernadette L. Ortega



Santa Fe ESPs List Four Good Reasons to Pay a Good Wage

Just before the Santa Fe City Council approved a living wage ordinance for municipal employees last March, many private and non-profit business representatives lined up to testify against extension of this measure to *all* Santa Fe workers.

Business folks contended that a higher wage floor would cause outside investment in this tourist mecca to wither, jobs to vanish, and—incredibly—students to drop out of school to earn a fortune at Wal-Mart, Burger King, or Taco Bell.

But NEA ESP members in Santa Fe make far more convincing arguments for raising local pay to 21st century levels. They say that:

1. People need to survive. When Bernadette L. Ortega, NEA-Santa Fe's vice president for ESPs, retired in 2000, she

"We need to start talking about making Santa Fe a place where people can live, buy a home, and spend time with their children on evenings and weekends."

—Former Santa Fe City Councilor Frank Montañó

earned just \$16,827 after working 21 years as an instructional assistant. Ortega says many of her ESP colleagues stay with the school system for the health benefits—and the love of working with kids—while working outside jobs just to "survive."

"At one point, I had four jobs and worked every day of the week," notes Peggy Martinez, a cafeteria worker at Cesar Chavez Elementary School who now moonlights at a country club. "You just can't make it in Santa Fe. Wages are better in Albuquerque and Espanola."

2. People need to rest. It's a wonder instructional assistant Andrea Harvey has energy left after a week at Agua Fria Elementary School, where she does everything from working with kids in an inclusion setting to filing, copying, and preparing classroom materials. When school's done, this mother of three waits

tables—for twice the money—another 32 hours a week at an Applebee's restaurant.

"I could quit [the school] and go over to the restaurant," Harvey says, "but I stay here for the kids and enjoy my job. But sometimes I feel like I'm burning out working two jobs."

3. People need to improve their skills. Harvey says a living wage "would mean not having to work a second job" and an opportunity, perhaps, to earn an associate's degree.

"Because of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's mandate that all Title I paraeducators have an associate's degree by 2006," notes Ortega, "instructional assistants in Santa Fe's four Title I schools will have to choose between taking college courses at night to meet this mandate and going to their second job."

The Santa Fe district will fund the paras' tuition, but the choices are painful: Take classes (to improve skills, move up the salary scale, or become a teacher), spend more time with the family, or work a second job.

"In some cases, there is no choice," Ortega laments. "You have to put food on the table."

4. People need a chance to live in their hometown. "Some people would like a chance to stay in Santa Fe and live," says Ortega, who notes that two of her own children had to move away to earn a decent living.

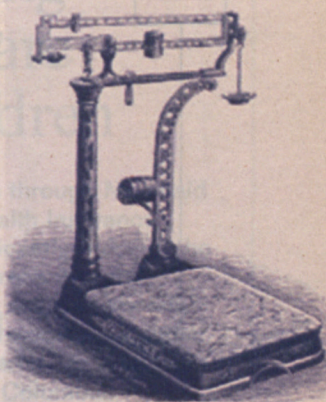
"The living wage issue will not go away," says former Santa Fe City Councilor Frank Montañó, a co-sponsor of the current living wage ordinance. "We need to start talking about making Santa Fe a place where people can afford to live and buy a home; afford to live in the city they were born, educated, and raised in; and spend time with their children on evenings and weekends."

—D.W. and J.O.

(Bernadette L. Ortega can be reached at BravoOrtega@webtv.net.)

Tipping the Scale at Fairbanks

On a bleak Vermont evening last winter—just six hours short of calling a strike—union bargainers from Lyndon Town School arrived at their superintendent's office for one last shot at reaching a contract. At this moment, "being a negotiator was the worst thing I had ever done," recalls third-grade teacher Michelle Green.



But when the negotiating team rolled into the parking lot, they were greeted by sign-carrying supporters, including parents, grandparents, kids, Vermont-NEA members from other school districts, and members of other area unions—including Fairbanks Scales workers from United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 234 in St. Johnsbury.

School board negotiators walked this gauntlet, too, and realized this community wanted a *settlement*. The parties wrapped up a contract that evening, after a year and a half of fruitless negotiations.

Green was deeply moved by the support of these scale manufacturing workers. So, when she heard in November that Local 234 was on strike over company demands for a pension freeze and a big wage cut in the form of health care co-pay hikes, Green and teacher colleague June Murphy visited the Fairbanks picket line on a "horrible, cold" Friday evening and started walking and talking.

The strikers "were so thrilled," says Green. "They could not believe somebody else came; and when we got back to school, we got others to go over to the line."

Soon, supporters from seven Vermont-NEA local affiliates in the state's "Northeast Kingdom" walked the Fairbanks line, donated money, and delivered food—including a batch of turkey soup prepared by Waterford School building rep Mary Florio.

Support for Fairbanks workers from community folks, local restaurant owners, and members of area unions—working everywhere from UPS to Vermont Central Power—"was amazing," says UE District 2 President Peter Knowlton. The UE reached an acceptable agreement with Fairbanks Scales after just 16 days on the picket line.

"Even though Vermonters are very quiet and private about our beliefs, we're all very independent and definitely take a stand," says Green. "I'm 59. This is the first time I have ever done something proactive and gone somewhere as a 'support person.' And I feel really good about it."

"I went to the Fairbanks workers' picket line because they came to us when we needed help—they set a very good example," Green adds. "That kind of mutual support is the most important thing, regardless of the settlement reached. You get back more than you give." ✓

—Dave Winans

[KUDOS TO...]

...members of the Blount County Education Association (BCEA) in Tennessee, who united with community supporters to replace a school board that hired a union-busting consultant and imposed its "best last" bargaining offer on teachers.

In two consecutive election cycles, intensive BCEA political action helped elect six of seven new board members—either former educators or relatives of educators.

The new board quickly passed a resolution to re-enter the negotiations process and to train administrators, board members, and BCEA

leaders in interest-based bargaining.

The result: In October, BCEA members ratified their first contract in three years. "The approval of the contract signals a new atmosphere of cooperation between BCEA and the Blount County Board of Education," says BCEA President Lynn Eubanks. "It's long overdue."

...members of the Arkansas Education Association, whose volunteer work across the state helped elect pro-public education candidate Mark Pryor to the U.S. Senate in November and defeat an incumbent, Senator Tim Hutchinson.

Just one example of this hard work: Each afternoon and Saturday, Active and Retired members of the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association (LRCTA) "walked every mile, every inch" of state District 36 on Pryor's behalf.

"As both a state representative and attorney general, Pryor has been very supportive of public education," says LRCTA activist Eleanor Coleman, a member of the NEA Minority Leadership Program Cadre. "We were able to tell the truth about his record and to carry every precinct in the district for him."

Healthy Students Learn Best

Teachers and school nurses—in both NEA and AFT—point out problems of students who come from families without health insurance.

Janice Lowry doesn't know who among her students has health insurance and who does not. But she always knows when a child has been seeing a doctor regularly.

Students who go to the doctor routinely don't come to school sick, says Lowry, a first-grade teacher at Metz Elementary School in Austin, Texas, and a member of Education Austin, a joint affiliate of NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). "They are in class when they need to be, and not in class when they don't."

Educators such as Lowry long have known that a child's success in school is linked to regular attendance and access to health care. Unfortunately, the latter is becoming more elusive.

Today, nearly 41 million people in the United States lack health coverage, and 9 million of these are children. Studies show that children whose families have no insurance are less likely to have a regular health care provider, less likely to have seen a doctor in the last year, and more likely to delay or avoid medical care when it is needed.

Access to affordable, quality health care—not only for NEA and AFT members, but for all Americans—is among the issues now being tackled by the NEAFT Joint Council.

A January 2002 report from the council's health care subcommittee



Texas teacher Janice Lowry can spot kids who don't receive regular medical care.

struggling and having a hard time with letters and symbols."

Lowry also points out that a child who has a contagious illness creates an additional problem: Other students get sick. "I have some kids," she says, "whose parents keep them out much longer than the school policy requires and some parents who don't keep them out long enough."

Medical experts say that uninsured children often don't get proper care for poor vision or for common childhood

"When uninsured children visit the emergency room for asthma or acute dental care, they are only being treated on an emergency basis and thus lack proper long-term regular care."

—New Jersey school nurse Carole Paladino

spotlights the alarming number of uninsured families and warns: "Children are disproportionately affected and our members, as educators, cannot ignore the implications of working with populations of children and their families who lack health insurance coverage."

The Price in Learning

A sick student can't concentrate, says Janice Lowry. For an ailing child, "doing school work is not of the utmost importance."

School work can be just as hard for students who fail their vision or hearing screenings and don't get help, Lowry adds. "I see those students

illnesses such as iron-deficiency anemia, asthma, sore throats, and earaches.

These conditions can be controlled. Left untreated, they have the potential to become chronic illnesses or lifelong disabilities.

Unfortunately, families with no health insurance often cannot afford to think about the long-term problems their children may face. "The working poor just don't have the funds," says Ann Babler, a parent support specialist at Metz Elementary and a member of Education Austin. "When you have to decide between putting food on the table or going to the doctor, you're going to put food on the table."

As a result, "uninsured children often have to use hospital emergency rooms as their primary health care provider," adds Carole Paladino, a certified school nurse in New Jersey's Millville school district. That's because their parents "cannot afford regular office visits, maintenance medications, and/or have difficulty finding providers that accept patients covered by Medicaid or the New Jersey Children's Health Insurance Program."

Paladino, a member of the Millville Education Association/NEA, points out that uninsured children with chronic illnesses such as asthma miss more school days than usual because they go without maintenance medications that prevent major flare-ups—which in return require emergency care.

"When children do visit the emergency room for asthma or acute dental care," Paladino concludes, "they are only being treated on an emergency basis and thus lack proper long-term regular care."

Finding Care Alternatives

Many parents of uninsured children have jobs that do not offer health benefits and pay wages so low that these parents cannot afford to buy health insurance on their own. Health care today is often too expensive for low- or even middle-income families. In 2000, the annual cost for an average health policy through an employer was \$2,426 for an individual and \$7,035 for a family.

This means that teachers and school nurses have had to become experts at finding health care alternatives for students who need care but lack coverage.

Marilyn Lawson, a school nurse at Harper Middle School in Houston and

a member of the Houston Federation of Teachers/AFT, says, "It's a challenge to work with families who don't have coverage, because it's hard for them to keep up with regular care."

If a child needs a pair of glasses or a visit to the doctor, "I've got to find the resources to get them care," points out Dorothy Marks, a school nurse in the Chicago Public Schools and a member of the Chicago Teachers Union/AFT.

When an uninsured student comes to Marks with a health problem, it's often at a critical stage. "Some students are embarrassed to come see me because they know their parents can't afford the treatment that will make them better," Marks says.

But Marks lets her students and their parents know that there are resources available to children who don't have insurance—although getting them takes time.

"Sometimes," Marks notes, "parents have to bite the bullet" and pay for medical care out of pocket. The alternative is to watch their children's health slowly deteriorate.

In most cases, however, schools can rely on community or school-based clinics and public hospitals that offer care to the uninsured. There also are public programs that can help fill some of the gaps in insurance coverage.

Thanks to the expansion of programs such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), more and more children from low-income families are eligible for public health insurance.

NEA and AFT support efforts such as "Covering Kids," a public awareness campaign aimed at reaching families of

the nearly 5 million uninsured children who are eligible for SCHIP. An initiative of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "Covering Kids" (www.coveringkids.org) seeks to connect uninsured children to low-cost and free health coverage programs in every state and the District of Columbia.

Each year this campaign, along with allied organizations at the national and local level, conducts a national back-to-school effort to help states inform parents of eligible children about the availability of SCHIP and Medicaid. The effort includes media advertising and enrollment drives in Latino and African-American communities.

In Texas—home to the largest number of uninsured children in the country—the SCHIP program makes it much easier to get students the services they need.

"Before SCHIP, there were very few low-cost services available," says parent support specialist Babler. "Now you don't feel like your hands are so tied." ✓

This article, second in a series on health care issues and how they affect educators, is a project of the NEAFT Partnership. A primary aim of the partnership is to keep members of both unions informed about joint programs and activities in areas of common concern. AFT staff writer Adrienne Coles wrote this article, which also appears in the February issue of AFT's American Teacher magazine.

SCHIP: Meeting The Health Care Needs of Children

Expansion of health coverage through Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) has significantly reduced the number of uninsured children in recent years.

Seventy percent of uninsured children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage under Medicaid and SCHIP. Both programs are available in every state and the District of Columbia.

Enacted in 1997, SCHIP provides health care coverage for children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford private health insurance. Since the program began, the percentage of children with coverage has increased for the first time in many years.

Today, more than 4 million children are enrolled in SCHIP. Once enrolled, children are eligible for a

variety of benefits, which vary from state to state. Most children can get regular checkups, immunizations, eyeglasses, visits to doctors, prescription drug coverage, and hospital care.

"It is a wonderful initiative that has provided health insurance to many children around the country," says American Federation of Teachers staffer John Abraham. Despite SCHIP's success, "we may have to fight to keep the program in place," he adds.

At present, the program relies too heavily on a state to do its part—by using appropriated funds to get children enrolled.

Under SCHIP, a state has three years in which to use the funds it receives for a given year. If it does not spend the money within that time, the federal government redistributes a portion of the unused money to other states that already have spent their allotment. Any remaining unused money must be given back to the U.S. Treasury.

Twenty-five states had forfeited \$1.2 billion in unspent SCHIP funds as of last October. Many states had to surrender their money because they received more than they could spend in the time allotted. Unless new legislation is passed to extend the deadline for states to use their funds, more than \$3 billion could be lost by the end of 2003.

Ironically, because of scheduled reductions in federal funding, states may have to drop nearly 900,000 children from the SCHIP program between next year and 2006. The timing of these funding reductions could not be worse as states struggle with budget problems and health care costs continue to grow.

In the meantime, NEA and AFT will push lawmakers to support more adequate funding for SCHIP, to expand coverage for more children and their parents, and to maintain their eligibility for the Medicaid program.

—Adrienne Coles



Julie Delton

States With the HIGHEST Percentages of Uninsured Children, 2001

State	Children Under Private/Employer-based Insurance (%)	Children Under Medicaid/SCHIP Insurance (%)	Children Uninsured for the Full Year (%)
1. Texas	3,699,848 (56.4%)	1,448,676 (22.1%)	1,410,750 (21.5%)
2. Arizona	958,519 (59.5%)	366,946 (22.8%)	285,588 (17.7%)
3. Florida	2,464,342 (59.6%)	995,577 (24.1%)	673,943 (16.3%)
4. California	6,105,771 (58.6%)	2,711,520 (26.0%)	1,594,841 (15.3%)
5. New Mexico	227,690 (43.0%)	220,373 (41.7%)	80,996 (15.3%)

States With the LOWEST Percentages of Uninsured Children, 2001

State	Children Under Private/Employer-based Insurance (%)	Children Under Medicaid/SCHIP Insurance (%)	Children Uninsured for the Full Year (%)
1. Vermont	83,873 (62.6%)	45,509 (33.9%)	4,684 (3.5%)
2. North Dakota	97,616 (70.7%)	34,600 (25.0%)	5,923 (4.3%)
3. Rhode Island	180,976 (70.7%)	63,164 (24.7%)	12,012 (4.7%)
4. Iowa	604,676 (79.2%)	121,641 (15.9%)	36,971 (4.8%)
5. Wisconsin	1,037,691 (76.4%)	254,856 (18.8%)	65,984 (4.9%)

Source: "Health Insurance Status of U.S. Children Through Age 18, by State, 2001," American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org/advocacy/schipef.htm).

Retiring on Dollars a Day

As health insurance premiums and other costs shoot up, educators on fixed incomes are getting squeezed. How secure is your retirement?

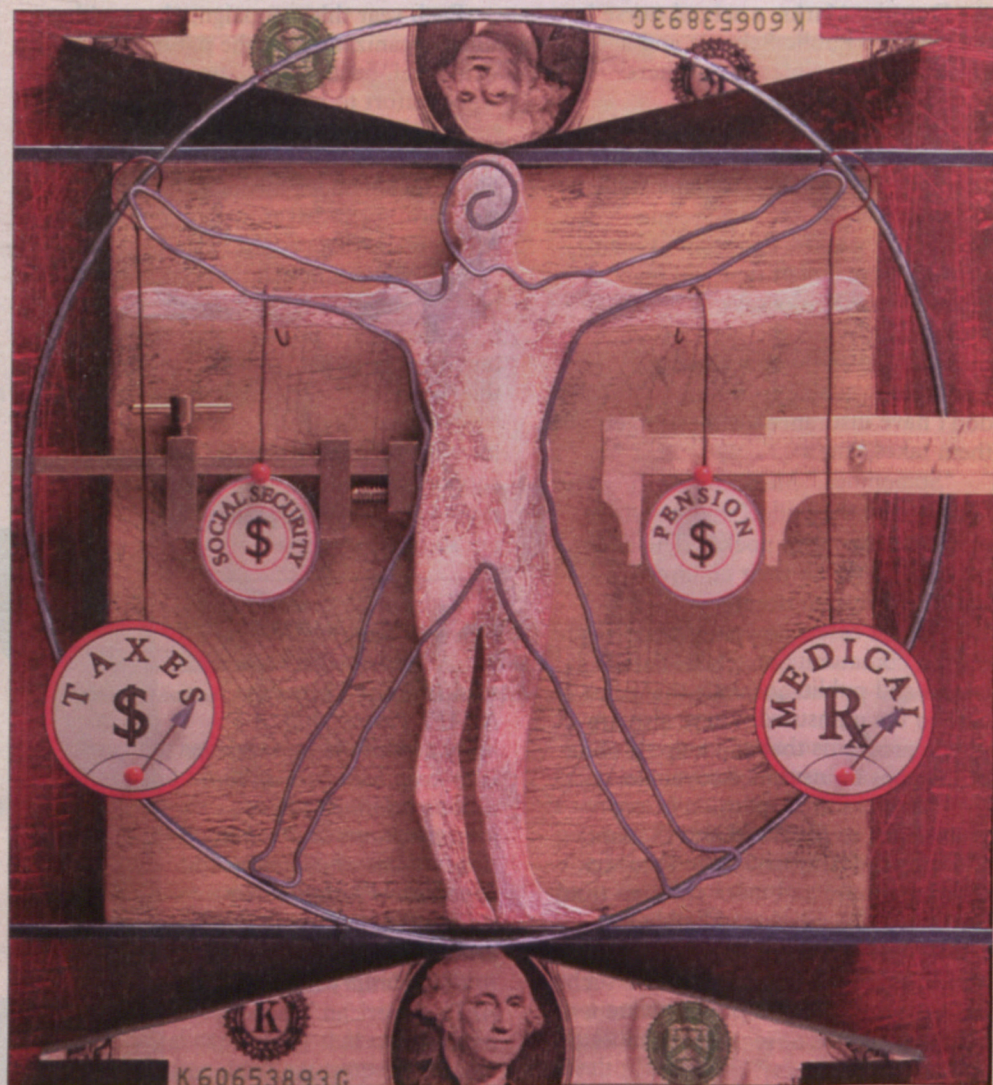
Irma Baker's retirement is dwindling away. Baker taught for 23 years in Falmouth, Maine, before her position was eliminated. Her years of service translate into a paltry monthly pension check—once taxes and health insurance premiums are deducted—of just \$80.

Health insurance for Baker and her husband, Fred, take the biggest bite. That deduction now consumes \$431.69 of her monthly check, 40 percent more than three years ago.

Compounding Baker's plight, Maine is one of 15 states where retirees may be adversely affected by a federal provision that curtails the Social Security benefits of some public employees receiving pensions (see "Social Security Provisions Shrink Pensions"). So Baker's monthly check from Social Security is just \$88, one-third of what it should be based on her contributions into the system.

Baker and many other retired teachers and education support professionals are learning some of the harsh financial facts of life for those leaving the schoolhouse behind:

- Educators' pensions are not generous, providing no buffer from the rising costs of everything from gas to groceries to property taxes. Particularly hard hit are older retirees, who earned lower salaries while on the job, have lost more of their pension's value because of inflation, and often don't have the option of returning to work full- or part-time.
- Health care and prescription drug costs—expenses that retirees incur at a much greater rate than Active members—are shooting upward at far above the rate of inflation. Prescription drug costs, for example, have risen 35 percent in the past two years and are expected to



Maria Rendon

continue to climb at double digit rates. Even in those localities where members can continue their health insurance coverage as they shift from Active to Retired status, rising premiums have become a real budget buster.

Combined, these two trends leave

many retirees just scraping by.

Consider Rhode Island member Joyce Fletcher. At 69, Fletcher is back to work part time bagging groceries at the Stop and Shop market. Her out-of-pocket drug costs of \$380 per month consume a large chunk of her pension

Social Security Provisions Shrink Pensions

Most teachers and education support professionals can use every retirement dollar they can get.

Unfortunately, some are discovering their Social Security benefits are lower than expected because of unfair federal laws that penalize those who devoted their careers to public service. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) affect individuals who worked both in a job for a state or local government that doesn't participate in Social Security as well as a job covered by Social Security. Although the provisions primarily affect members in 15 states (see box), there are members in every state who are affected.

Feeling the pinch are members such as Angie Uhlmeier, who taught in private

schools for 15 years—paying into Social Security all the while—then in public schools for 19 more. Uhlmeier called Social Security for two years before she retired, asking about her expected benefits, but got few answers. "Three months after I retired, they informed me that because I receive a \$1,400 monthly pension from the Denver Public Schools, I could not claim anything from the \$630 monthly Social Security benefit I was due and only about \$100 from my late husband's \$1,069 monthly benefit." Receiving the benefits she had earned would mean she wouldn't have to struggle quite so hard to make ends meet, she says.

"Until you retire, or really begin planning to retire, you don't necessarily realize how much the laws affect you," says Martha

Karlovetz, president of Missouri NEA-Retired. But since educators' pensions aren't generous to begin with, the GPO and WEP cause real financial hardships for many retirees.

NEA's Government Relations department has been swamped with letters and e-mails from people like Uhlmeier testifying to how

Although individuals affected by the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision live in every state, the offsets predominantly impact educators living in these states:

Alaska	Maine
California	Massachusetts
Colorado	Missouri
Connecticut	Nevada
Georgia*	Ohio
Illinois	Rhode Island*
Louisiana	Texas
Kentucky*	

*Some local governments



Kevin Brusie

Irma Baker's 23 years of service in public schools net her a monthly pension of just \$80.

from 24 years of teaching. Even with the part-time job—and splitting costs with two sisters with whom she lives—she admits she has to make compromises on her medications. A diabetic, she has to take her insulin, but she sometimes delays buying her osteoporosis drug until payday if she runs short on cash.

Fletcher's late husband, a machinist, passed away after a long illness that "ate up every bit of savings we had," and she now worries about her own financial security. "When I retired, I didn't anticipate these kinds of expenses."

Seeking Relief

To provide for healthier and more predictable pensions, NEA affiliates are working to enhance the formulas used to calculate pensions and ensure appropriate cost-of-living allowances. Despite the nation's slowing economy, some affiliates have won well-deserved increases for retirees. For example:

- The New Jersey Education Association recently garnered a 9 percent increase in pensions for retirees, says Roe Jankowski, an NEA-Retired ESP member. "On a \$30,000 a year pension, you're talking about \$210 more per month. How did they win the increase? "We are very involved in the political process," says Jankowski. "We invite legislators to our county and state meetings,

we go out and work for them, we attend legislative conferences. We also partner with Active members on both Retired and Active issues." Working regularly with legislators is key, Jankowski says, because "in retirement [the legislature] governs everything we get—they govern the health benefits, the pensions. So we make sure to communicate our needs to them."

- Arizona Education Association-Retired scored a recent victory with two significant new cost-of-living adjustments (which they refer to as permanent benefit increases, or PBIs) for participants in the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS). The Association took the lead in forming a coalition of groups participating in ASRS and successfully lobbying the legislature, according to Arizona's Barbara Matteson, vice president of NEA-Retired. One of the new PBIs boosted pensions by a set monthly amount based on each participant's total years of service. Another increased pensions based on the number of years of retirement. The new provisions—which added a total of about \$100 a month to Matteson's pension—avoid penalizing older retirees, who retired when salaries were lower. "We were able to get much more support for this kind of benefit, as it gives the older retiree as much as the recent retiree, and the older ones needed the increase the most," says Matteson.

At the national level, NEA provides support to retirees by lobbying Congress, providing technical support and training to affiliates working on pension and health care issues and—significantly—through the fast-growing NEA-Retired program.

Launched in 1983, NEA-Retired

NEA-Retired: Fighting for Your Future

The NEA-Retired program—the official retired organization dedicated to the priorities of NEA members—advocates for strong retirement benefits.

NEA-Retired members also gain from a host of exclusive benefits designed to protect their financial security during retirement. NEA Member Benefits has developed special offerings for members, including insurance (such as life, homeowners, and long-term care) and loan programs (including reverse mortgages).

You can join NEA-Retired as a lifetime "pre-retired" member, if you are currently an Active NEA member, or join upon your retirement from active service. For more information on the benefits of membership, contact your state affiliate's retired program. Or contact NEA-Retired, 1201 16th St., N.W., Suite 410, Washington, DC 20036 or e-mail tcrenshaw@nea.org.



recently topped 200,000 in total membership. NEA-Retired members work closely with Active members in every state, fighting for strong pensions, participating in tutoring, and working to elect candidates who support public schools.

Changing the financial picture for retirees is going to require sustained, concerted efforts by Retired and Active members alike. Lily Eskelsen, NEA Secretary Treasurer, notes that the tight fiscal climate in the states, exacerbated by the slumping economy and the downturn in the stock market, has leg-

islators looking for ways to cut back. Some have set their sights on public employee retirement systems.

In state after state, "our pension systems are under political attack," Eskelsen says. Private market advocates are pushing lawmakers to replace guaranteed pensions with personal retirement accounts subject to the ups and downs of the stock market. (Remember Enron?)

The upshot? "It's never been more critical for our Active and Retired members to work hand in glove," says Eskelsen, "because everyone is going to be affected by these privatization efforts."

—John O'Neil

the lost benefits affect their retirement finances. For example, more than 300,000 individuals lose an average of \$3,600 each year due to the GPO—enough to push some under the poverty line.

ESPs are especially hard hit. "The GPO is a disaster for ESPs because it hits the poorest of the poor," says attorney and NEA consultant Cynthia Moore. "It hits a predominantly women workforce, those who work part-time—for example, the cafeteria worker who is really depending upon her husband's Social Security benefits, but finds that the GPO reduces it. It's just a horrific result."

Uhlmeier points out another pernicious effect of the federal provisions: At a time when districts are trying to draw qualified individuals from business and the military to

fill vacancies, GPO and WEP will deter them. "When they hear they stand to lose the Social Security they earned in their other job, they're going to lose interest."

NEA has been a catalyst for bringing attention to the discriminatory impact of GPO/WEP and will work this year to develop a cadre of members and affiliate staff to work more intensively at generating grassroots activities in their states. NEA had helped to recruit numerous Congressional co-sponsors for legislation repealing GPO/WEP last year, but the new 108th Congress means new bills—and new advocates—will be needed.

You can track action on the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision by going to NEA's Legislative Action Center (www.nea.org/lac).

NOW ACCEPTING GRANT APPLICATIONS

Liberty and Access *for All*

As an educator, you are acutely aware of the frustration many of your students can experience trying to access the information they need to complete their classwork, conduct research or just keep up with homework assignments.

If you have the will to help get your students better connected, the Beaumont Foundation of America has the technology to help you do it.

The Beaumont Foundation of America, a nonprofit organization, assists public, private, parochial and charter schools to integrate technology into instruction by providing the educational technology tools so critical to success. The Foundation is granting state-of-the art, Internet-enabled, wireless laptop computers to qualifying school districts, schools and other educational programs and organizations where a minimum of 50 percent of the students qualify for the National School Lunch Program.

Like you, we want students to have the necessary skills to participate, compete and succeed. These computers can help your students stay connected with the world and take advantage of the unlimited educational opportunities of the Internet. And the benefits to them as students and you as an educator, are as limitless as the information you can help them access.

The Beaumont Foundation of America is granting computer hardware to qualifying non-profits, faith-based and community organizations, libraries, schools and individuals in need. **Grant applications for 2003 now being accepted through March. For more information, including future grant application opportunities, contact the Beaumont Foundation of America at www.bmtfoundation.com or call us at 866.505.COMP.**



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Andy Powell

Is "abstinence-only" the best sex education policy for schools to implement?

yes

no

Consider this:

"Good morning, class. Today we're going to talk about how to drive a car safely, even if you've been drinking. Now, it's really better not to drink and drive, because you might end up dead, but there are some ways to do it so that you cut your risk of becoming injured or dying."

The fact is that the true message sent by adults, the media, and the schools is the exact opposite: "Don't drink and drive." And we don't offer training in how to do it safely.

Now, let's change the scene just a little.

"Good morning, class. Today we're going to learn how to have safe sex (now referred to as "safer sex" because safe sex doesn't really exist).

"We'll show you how to put a condom on a banana, and some other things you can do to minimize your risk of contracting an incurable disease, which may make you sterile (chlamydia), be a precursor to cervical cancer (HPV), or cause death (HIV).

"Oh, and you might end up pregnant. Then your choices are abortion ("one dead, one wounded," to quote a recent bumper sticker), adoption (a lifelong hole in your heart), or parenthood (a 24/7 commitment that will make school, college, work, independence, and emotional stability very difficult)."

Why can't we take the drinking and driving approach of "just don't do it"? Statistics show that kids do care about what the adults in their lives have to say.

To me, teen promiscuity is in the same category as Russian roulette, and promoting safe sex is just handing them the gun.

If you knew that within the next 12 months your child would have a child, an incurable disease, or be HIV positive, how far would you be willing to go today to prevent that? We are talking about 4 million teens a year who can expect to deal with these consequences.

Let's raise the standard and tell kids, unequivocally, what is in their best interest. Why is it that we want so much to protect their sexual activity, but not their very lives? ✓



ELIZABETH BRADLEY teaches math at Lewiston High School in Lewiston, Maine, and won a Presidential Award in 2000 for her work. She has taught for 15 years, interrupted by eight years as a business applications programmer.

The reality is that more students are becoming sexually active at earlier ages. As an educator, I had to get involved. I have been using "Baby, Think It Over" at my junior high school for five years. Pregnancy dropped from 15 the first year, to three last semester, and zero this year! This program has a "baby" simulator. Students, male and female, are given "baby" to take home for five days. They experience the endless cries, waking at night, feeding, changing diapers.

Meanwhile, at school, we talk about child abuse, how to place babies to sleep correctly, and more. Students budget the weekly costs of caring for a baby. They inquire about jobs available to them at their age (13-16). Students realize how hard raising a baby can be for them.

One girl who loved baby-sitting became so frustrated after two days that "baby" was thrown in a clothes hamper and covered to drown out the cries. Her parents explained the consequences had this been a real baby. The student learned that this is not the time for her to become a parent.

We also discuss STDs, and we talk about how making love is different from sex, which is what teens are having. Making love is a beautiful experience in a true relationship between adults ready and able to take on responsibilities, not teens who got pregnant by mistake. We do role-plays: You're with your boyfriend, lose control, go all the way and don't even think about birth control, and a while later the girl is pregnant and all dreams are now put on hold. Or, things get hot but you stop and say, "Wait a second, I'm not ready for this."

Yet I cannot be so naive as not to see that most teens become sexually active at an early age. So I must also talk about birth control. But schools that accept federal "abstinence-only" funds are not allowed to teach *any* factual information about the effectiveness of any form of birth control.

Students who have complete information about disease transmission and contraceptive use are the most likely to remain abstinent and will protect themselves if they choose to be sexually active. We have worked with over 400 students, and only three became pregnant in high school. ✓

EILEEN TOLEDO has taught English in middle schools for 14 years, currently at the Pablo Avila Junior High School in Camuy, Puerto Rico. She runs the "Baby, Think It Over" program one period a week and wrote a master's thesis on it.



What's Your Opinion?

Is "abstinence-only" the best sex education policy for schools to implement?

To vote, visit our website at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Do you serve the kids better when you live in the community? The tally on this

Debate question from the last *NEA Today*:

70% Yes

30% No

Is summer school worthwhile?

If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

Turning Off the Lights—and Seeing

What would you do if a bunch of students sauntered into your classroom in broad daylight and confiscated your coffee pot, that personal fridge of yours—and, oh, your radio, too?

At Eisenhower High School in Rialto, California, a group of students actually did the dirty deed—but the result was not a suspension

or fine, or even mass breakdowns among teachers.

It was a prestigious award for saving energy.

It all started last fall when NEA member Terry Blanke and 50 students from her virtual tech classes decided to enter The Green Schools Program, a national initiative that encourages schools to be energy conscious and earth friendly. After six months of meticulous conservation, the students helped their school save a whopping \$20,000 in energy and gas. The key, it turned out, was in the planning.

Blanke and her students first did an energy audit of the school, charting the school's energy usage with a physicist and identifying costly energy expenses. One of the biggest culprits, they discovered, were the teachers' personal luxuries—coffee pots, refrigerators, microwaves, and radios. The students decided hands-down those had to go. "A few teachers complained at first," Blanke admits sheepishly, "but then they realized that they could live without them." (And nobody wanted to look like an energy-sapping ogre, either.)

After firing up that first round of bright ideas, the school's power was shut down between 4 p.m. and 7 a.m. The students also developed websites, taught elementary students about energy conservation, wrote songs, and

even talked with local leaders about energy efficiency. By the end of the year, all contraband coffee pots had been captured and the school tallied savings of \$18,000 for energy and \$2,000 for gas. Although some teachers missed their caffeine fixes, all the money saved in energy was reinvested into the school. And, Blanke says, everybody is now more conscientious of small energy saving moves like turning off lights and spending less time with the fridge door open. "It was great to see that the kids realized they can really make a difference," she says.

Their efforts paid off in another way, too, because Blanke and her students won this year's Earth Apple Award from Green Schools, along with a trip to the Smart Design Forum in Washington, D.C. Now the students are continuing the energy-conscious efforts by educating their fellow students and parents and conducting energy audits in their own homes.

Blanke says although her students were the biggest winners in this effort, she learned some "illuminating" lessons of her own. "Kids are absolutely wonderful," she says. "If you just let them, they will attempt anything."

—Leah Lakins



Bob Riha Jr.

Working on an energy conservation project, Terry Blanke shows her students how to use a laser gun to measure light temperature.

We Hold These Truths...

Imagine standing, say, outside your local post office and being approached by a kid who wants to know if you know the answers to questions like, "What's the Fifth Amendment?" or "What truths are self-evident in the Declaration of Independence?"

Would you be ready?

Throughout Colorado, kids are doing exactly that and having plenty of fun. It's all part of a growing movement across the country to help students understand the importance of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence—and to celebrate Liberty Day.

You may not have heard about it yet, but the day was actually started six years ago by the Lions Club of Denver, after members realized that these two national documents were missing from many area classrooms. Determined to do something, they began taking donations to print and distribute a pocket-sized booklet with the two treasures in them. The free books helped, but to really excite kids, teachers began urging a day devoted solely to the teaching of the documents. So the Lions Club chose March 16, the birthday of

James Madison, widely considered the "father of the Constitution."

Soon after, says Andy McKean, national coordinator for Liberty Day, teachers began coming up with all kinds of creative ways to use the book to supplement their teaching—including sending kids out to quiz the public. That fun exercise, he says, helps reinforce what students learn in the classroom and also lays the groundwork for civic activism.

So far Liberty Day has been officially recognized by 15 governors, and McKean thinks the numbers will grow. The books are already being used in schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. "I've heard numerous stories from teachers about how they use the books to help teach the material," McKean says. Students like them, too, because they fit handily in their pockets. "They don't have to worry about lugging around a big heavy textbook," McKean says.

McKean notes that while he hopes Liberty Day becomes a truly national event, people don't have to wait for it to become official where they are. "The lessons of Liberty Day can be taught any day of the year," he says.

—Jozen Cummings



Artville

For More: To get copies of the books, contact Andy McKean at 303/333-3434 or visit www.libertyday.org.



Reading Research: There's More—Really

When it comes to reading instruction programs, one could easily march into a new century waiting for educators and researchers to agree on which ones work. That's because some show spectacular results for some students, yet are dismal failures for others. It's the nature of the beast—which is why when the National Reading Panel (NRP) last year issued a report that showcased findings from a limited set of reading research studies, the protests from educators declaring that there's got to be more did not come in a whimper. It was a bonafide hue and cry.

That's, in part, because the Bush Administration is now only giving reading grants to school districts with programs based on the so-called "scientific research" model used by researchers highlighted in that NRP report.

Does that mean other programs are inferior? What else *should* educators know?

These are questions NEA's Student Achievement Department is now trying to help answer in a series of concise, easy-to-read publications. The five pamphlets, says Barbara Kapinus, NEA's reading specialist, offer educators and policy makers a glimpse of the wealth of other research widely considered

acceptable for building strong reading programs. The research featured covers many reading-related topics actually omitted in the NRP report. And though some of this research was not conducted using the NRP's narrow—some say overly stringent—methodology requirements, it is still "widely accepted by the community of researchers," says Kapinus. And that acceptance, according to a recent National Research Council report, is what matters most.

Four of the booklets are written by nationally recognized reading experts and are based on rigorous research studies. One looks at research on beginning reading instruction; three others tout the characteristics of teachers and schools that are effective in teaching kids to read and that promote reading achievement. The fifth is based on the report of the NEA's Task Force on Reading, and celebrates what teachers themselves have come to know from experience. As Becky Pringle, an NEA Executive Board member and chair of the task force, puts it, "Teachers really are the experts. So a lot of the research simply supports what many of them have been saying and successfully implementing to address the very diverse needs of their students."

"We just wanted educators to have access to the widest possible research," explains Kapinus. "It's not a hostile message. It just says, 'There's more to what's out there than what some folks say is available.' Educators can use these in program planning, teachers can use them to inform policy makers, even parents can use them."

—Marilyn Milloy

For More: E-mail Montré Dupree at mdupree@nea.org for details about the booklets and to order copies.

Space Race

Last May, instead of counting down the days until school would be out, seventh graders at Russell Middle School in Omaha, Nebraska, were counting down the seconds until liftoff.

As part of an innovative curriculum developed by science teacher David Hemphill, the students launched personally constructed air-and-water-powered rockets—and the project was, well, a booming success. Not only did students learn about Newton's laws, but they also learned about scientific method, mathematics, and computers.

"Summer was just around the corner," recalls Hemphill, who funded the project with grants awarded by The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education and his local school district, "but these kids were excited about coming to school, and excited about what they were learning."

Hemphill conceived of the project because rocketry seemed the perfect way to roll together a broad interdisciplinary course of study in science and math. It's no small concern now that the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act calls for annual testing in math for grades 3-8 beginning in 2005. That year states must also adopt standards in science, and annual testing in that subject will begin two years later. Hemphill figures it's better to get students energized and connected now than later.

"Students built their own rockets out of 2-liter soda bottles," he explains. "They learned about scientific method by conducting repeated tests on things like fin design and what mixture of compressed air and water in the rocket was ideal." Russell Middle, he says, incorporates an entire seventh-grade module on Newton's laws into its curriculum, and water rockets are great for the study of gravity and motion. Students filmed their rockets digitally and viewed their

launches frame by frame on computers. "This enabled them to conduct mathematical data analysis about acceleration and velocity using spreadsheet software," Hemphill says. "So it sharpened their computer skills as well."

Hemphill teamed up with fellow Russell science teacher Alan Koebel to conduct the project. Altogether, 50 groups of four students each designed and built rockets. Using an air compressor and a specially built launch pad, each group launched its rocket three times.

"It was quite an event," says Hemphill. "Some of the rockets topped out at more than 200 feet. But the most impressive thing was how much fun they had with a project that effectively taught them the principles behind making their rockets fly."

—Matt Simon

For More: E-mail David Hemphill at dchemphill@mpsomaha.org. Apply for a grant today from The NEA Foundation at www.nfie.org.

Dave Hemphill's students built and launched their own rockets as a way of learning about scientific method, math, and computers.



Eric Francis

I Can Do It!

Veteran teachers help beginners survive in the classroom.

Beginning a teaching career can be a daunting, overwhelming experience. Depending upon the school, a new teacher may confront an overcrowded classroom, no mentor, and little time to meet with peers or plan courses. In too many cases, new teachers see little hope of handling the challenges before them, and they leave the profession.

Now NEA has come to the aid of new teachers with a six-hour crash course in classroom management called "I Can Do It." Through the program, experienced teachers share the secrets of surviving and thriving during the first five years in the profession. NEA currently is collaborating with 22 state

don't master classroom management, it makes teaching much less effective and less satisfying for teachers and students alike." Webster found the program such a boost to her classroom effectiveness that she then enrolled in VEA's three-day course to become a program trainer.

During the "I Can Do It" sessions, trainers focus on strategies that will help beginning teachers successfully manage their classrooms, such as establishing a positive classroom climate, using rules and routines to manage instruction, and maintaining critical relationships.

"Good education is a partnership between teachers, students, and parents," says Webster. "See parents as your allies—not your adversaries. The

plan to provide new teachers with the tools they needed to succeed, says Patricia Rucker, a former teacher and now a consultant for the CTA "I Can Do It" program.

The first "I Can Do It" trainings were so well received in San Bernardino that CTA expanded the program statewide. Before long, representatives of NEA affiliates from across the country traveled to California to learn about the program and take it back to their home states.

"We sent people to learn the California program, and began our own in 1999," says Betty Lambdin, who coordinates "I Can Do It" for the VEA. "Since then, it has spread fast and furiously in Virginia. We've already trained thousands of new teachers, and we have



Photos by Paul Telford

Music teacher Mary Jo Webster now trains new teachers in the "I Can Do It" program.

affiliates to offer the program, and thousands of new teachers have taken advantage of it.

"These are the things you don't learn in college, but which are vital to your success as a teacher," says Mary Jo Webster, a high school music teacher in Falls Church, Virginia, who took the training course through the Virginia Education Association (VEA). "If you

better the relationship you build with parents, the more effective you will be in helping students learn."

"I Can Do It" started in the mid-1990s in San Bernardino, California, when chapter leaders and members from the California Teachers Association (CTA) began investigating why so many teachers in the county left the profession within the first five years on the job.

The chapter presidents met with active teachers and with teachers who had left the district and developed a

30 teachers currently conducting weekly trainings."

So what does it take to keep your classroom under control? "I Can Do It" trainers have some advice:

"Go slow to go fast," says Ronda Royal, a third- and fourth-grade teacher in La Mesa, California, now in her fifth year as a trainer. "Spend the first several weeks of the school year going over rules, routines, and expectations with your students. Let this information gradually take hold. Then you can keep



RESOURCES

Secondary Success

Teaching and the Art of Successful Classroom Management helps beginning secondary teachers establish classroom rules and inspire classroom discipline. The book, available from the NEA Professional Library for \$14.95, also includes tips on maintaining the class record book, planning daily lessons, mastering

questioning techniques, designing meaningful tests, and avoiding the end-of-term blahs. For more information or to order a copy, call 800/229-4200 or visit <http://home.nea.org/books/>.

Elementary Secrets

Sixty elementary teachers share their secrets of classroom management in *The Discipline Checklist*, available from the NEA Professional Library for \$4.50. This practical easy-to-read guide

includes suggestions for motivating students, modeling positive interactions, and maintaining flexibility in your discipline strategies. For more information, call 800/229-4200 or visit <http://home.nea.org/books/>.

FREE Stuff

You can find educational resources from more than 30 federal agencies on the Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) website at

www.ed.gov/free. The site provides one-stop access to learning resources developed by The Library of Congress, NASA, the National Archives, the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, the Peace Corps, and other agencies. Visitors can search by subject, or check out the prepared lists of resources for topics such as the arts, vocational education, health and safety, and educational technology.

your instruction going at a brisk, consistent pace later."

Rucker agrees. "Remember that routines are as important as rules. Rules are about managing behavior, but routines are the key to managing instruction. Make sure kids know the signals, verbal and nonverbal, that you use for instruction and classroom management." ✓



—Matt Simon

For more: E-mail Linda James at ljames@nea.org.

Noisy Classroom

Quieting a rambunctious group can be a challenge, but I succeed with this trick. I ask the children to copy my movement patterns, saying "do what I do" while I move my arms up and down, pat my head, or touch my nose. Initially, I do one movement and change it every five seconds. Later, I perform a pattern of move-

ments. Children need to watch and tend to stop talking as they concentrate on imitating my motions. In addition to getting their attention, this gives

them a simple movement break. For noisier groups, I clap patterns and have the students repeat them. I continue the clapping patterns until everyone is quiet and joins the game.

Janet Shlegle
Loveville, Maryland

Post-It® Charts

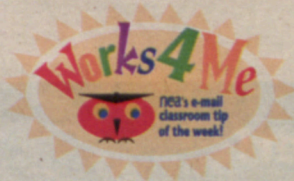
When I make a new seating chart, I put each child's name on a small Post-It note and then attach the notes to a piece of paper. I can move the sticky notes quickly to change the chart without erasing or forgetting a student. I store the notes and chart in a clear protector sheet so I don't lose any of the Post-Its. The charts save time and paper.

Tina Thompson
Lexington, Nebraska

Have a great idea?

You can pass along your tip to *NEA Today's* 2.5 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
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- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By e-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday



[DILEMMA]

How do you get your class back on task after lunch?

I ask my students to put their feet flat on the floor, take everything off their desks, and put their hands on their desks. Then I ask them to stare quietly at the clock and, in silence, watch the second hand go around for one complete minute.

Ann Ribinsky Brown
High school English teacher
South Plainfield, New Jersey

aloud and let them draw while they listen to the story.

Shawna Kurr
Special education teacher
Warren, Maine

■ Reading to my students gets them settled down and back on task. The children are so interested in the story, they listen from the moment I start reading. It is a great way to transition back to learning.

Jennifer Vince
Fourth-grade teacher
Columbus, Ohio

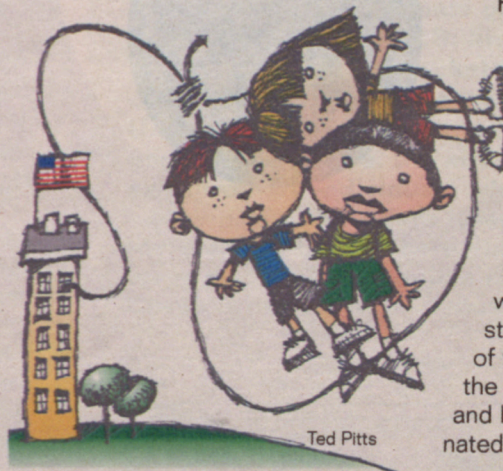
■ After lunch, my students have 10 minutes to use the bathroom, water fountain, or complete other quick jobs. At the scheduled time, I begin reading an ongoing, chapter book aloud. This motivates the children to be on time.

Richard W. Rogers
Third-grade teacher
Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

■ I have a class in the middle of the lunch shifts. I inform the class of what we will do before and after lunch. As they return from lunch, I remind them of the activities left to perform.

Katrice A. Lucas
Ninth-grade social studies teacher
Baltimore, Maryland

■ The best way to get my students to settle down from lunch is to have a quiet activity for them to do. I read a book



■ My third period class meets for 30 minutes, followed by lunch, and then an hour of class. Students know that after lunch they will take a quiz. This strategic placement of the daily quiz gets the class back on task and has virtually eliminated student tardiness.

Linda Turner
Math teacher
Jacksonville, Florida

Got an Answer?

How do you help a child whose parents are getting divorced?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

Nobody Ever Told Me

Classroom Distraction

There are some things that you just need to learn on your own during your first year as a teacher. My first year was quite an adventure, to say the least.

One day in particular sticks out in my mind. I made it through the day with the usual trials and tribulations. In the late afternoon I had to attend a meeting. I was just about to leave when my children started yelling that one student was playing with a balloon.

I looked at the student the children were talking about and sure enough he was play-

ing with something. I told him to bring it to me. He handed me the "toy," and when I looked down I was holding a bright pink condom. My jaw dropped as my kids asked what it was. I did not know how to respond, so I simply told the class that toys were not allowed in school. I just could not believe that a second grader would bring a condom to school. I was at a loss for words.

Nobody ever told me how to deal with a situation like this.

Jamie Sienko
Second-grade teacher
Baltimore, Maryland

Got a Story?

E-mail kloschert@nea.org.



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Here's how to register!

Go to www.owl.org. Click on the register button on the right hand side of the screen. Complete the registration form. You'll be asked for your 10-digit NEA membership number. It can be found on the mailing label of this copy of *NEA Today* (see illustration).

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Powerful Presentations

Dear Web Editor,

I'm tired of creating boring Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations! Do you have any tips about how I can make my classroom presentations more fun for my students?

Your question tops the "most frequently asked questions" list among teachers who use Microsoft PowerPoint. Teachers and education support professionals complain about endlessly searching PowerPoint's clipart library for the right graphic. In my humble opinion, I don't believe it's possible to craft a PowerPoint presentation that completely matches one's style, personality, or message using only what comes out of the software box. You must be willing to experiment, and PowerPoint lets you be as creative as you want. The software includes some great tools to support the addition and manipulation of external graphic, sound, and video files in any presentation.

To make the look of your presentation match its subject, start by designing your presentation's "background" or, specifically, creating the "slide master" template. You access the slide master from PowerPoint's VIEW menu bar: select VIEW, then MASTER, then VIEW MASTER.

Once you're in the VIEW MASTER mode, you can set the font style, size, color, and alignment for all the slides in the entire presentation. Any additions and/or font settings you establish here will apply to every slide.

In the VIEW MASTER mode you can add your own graphics as well. Whatever you add to the white space at this stage becomes the background for every slide.

For example, you might have a digital photo stored on your computer's hard drive and want to use it in a presentation. From the INSERT menu bar, select PICTURE, then FROM

FILE. Locate the photo you want to use and select INSERT. Your picture will appear on the screen. When you select INSERT, a PICTURE tools palette also should appear. This window bar contains command icons that resize, crop, lighten or darken the image, and adjust the colors. If you don't see these tools, select the TOOLS menu bar option, then click CUSTOMIZE, and add a "check" to the PICTURE selection box. Keep in mind, not every tool on the menu will work with every graphic.

Here are some additional design tips you should know and practice:

- Always build your presentation outline first. Then set your text and arrange your slides. Add the art last.
- Only use art that's relevant to your message. Less is always more.
- Never compromise your message by making your artwork the focus of your presentation. Adjust the brightness, contrast, and opacity controls so that your picture won't obscure the text on your slides.
- Use the corner selection buttons on a picture when you resize it. (These appear on the picture after you import it into PowerPoint. You may need to click on the picture to see them.) This ensures that the picture resizes proportionately. If you resize using the side or bottom selection buttons, your picture will look stretched or squished.
- Review your presentation in the same location using the projection equipment you will use when delivering to the real audience. I've never seen a presentation look the same on both the computer and projection screen. Colors and brightness always differ.
- If you receive any complaints

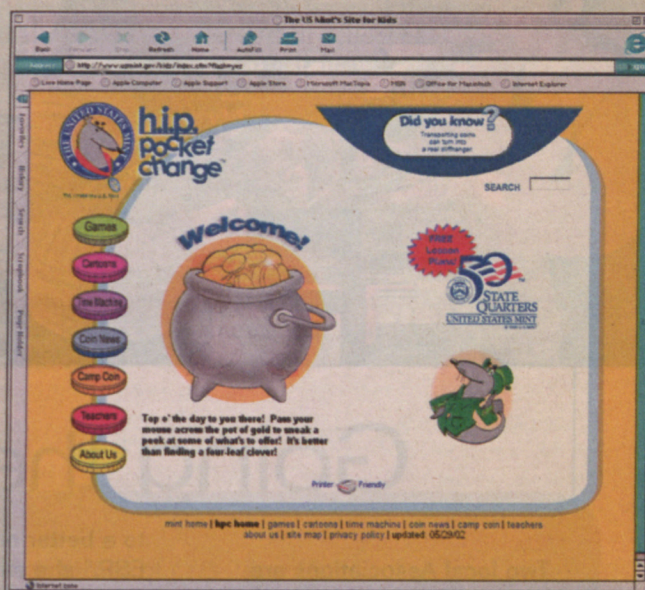
about the visibility of your presentation press ESC to stop immediately! Go to the VIEW menu bar option and select MASTER then VIEW MASTER. Here you can change your colors or delete background pictures.

If you don't have a graphics library, check out the Microsoft Design Gallery Live at <http://dgl.microsoft.com/>. Here you can download a new image each day or browse the clipart collections to find images sorted by theme. ✓

Editor's Pick

H.I.P. Pocket Change

The U.S. Mint offers a fun educational website designed to help students generate an interest in coins, the Mint, and U.S. history. The History In Your Pocket (H.I.P.) Pocket Change site showcases the connection between U.S. coins and U.S. history. Through games, stories, and other engaging activities, the site brings to life the extraordinary individuals who appear on coins. In addition, the site offers lesson plans and project ideas and helps teachers share the innovative ways they've found to use coins in the classroom. Check it out at www.usmint.gov/kids/.



OWL Watch

Introducing OWL.org

OWL.org is here! The new website and online community for NEA members provides practical information, tools, and services to help educators do their jobs and grow professionally.

The site supports members with a variety of features, including timely education news, education tips and strategies, discussion boards, and resource pages that identify other useful and notable sites on the Web.

The site includes several channels:

"My Profession" provides information and tools to help educators in the classroom and workplace. Teachers will find lesson plans and strategies, classroom management ideas—including the popular Works4Me tips—and

professional development information. Members who identify themselves as education support professionals can view content specifically for support staff.

The NEA channel offers news and information from the Association, including updates on important issues and pending legislation, and interviews with Association leaders.

"My Life" addresses personal interests and lifestyle issues, including health, finance, recipes, and more.

The State channel presents news and information from members' state affiliates. At press time, a limited number of states offered channels, but more will be added during the next few months.



OWL.ORG
OUR WEB LOCATION FOR EDUCATION
A service of the National Education Association and its State and Local Affiliates

Following the theme of "Educators Helping Educators," most of OWL's editorial content comes from NEA members and educators. Organizations such as PBS, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the National Women's Health Resource Center provide other content. In addition, several OWL partners provide exclusive offers to NEA members, including discounts on online professional development courses.

Check out OWL at www.owl.org. Registration is free, quick, and easy. OWL.org is constantly evolving based on feedback from the community of users. Help OWL grow by sending comments, ideas, and contributions to asktheowl@owl.org.

[PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT]

Professional Learning

Michigan center offers ESPs training, certification.

For years, a key employment issue for Michigan's education support professionals (ESPs) has been the lack of training and professional development they need to perform their jobs well and advance in their careers. The Michigan Education Association (MEA) has responded by creating the Michigan ESP Center for Professional Learning, a program that required six years of planning and development.

"Time and time again, we hear our support staff members tell us their jobs are vastly different than they were 20

years ago, or even 10 years ago," says David Crim, director of the new center. "Until now, our ESP members have often been overlooked—there's been little professional development to speak of. That's all changing."

The center works with local community colleges and school districts to offer two certificate programs for ESPs. A level one certificate program, now offered by the center, requires ESPs to complete 40 hours of required and elective course work. A level two certificate program, which focuses on advanced education specific to participants' jobs, will be introduced within the next two years. The center offered its first set of classes in the fall.

"This is a very satisfying and exciting moment," says Carol Brannan, a 30-year ESP who works in library monographic services at Central Michigan University. "I've seen the need for ESP professional education since the start of my career. What makes the creation of this center so special is that ESPs have worked gradu-

ally to gain respect for years. Now that respect is being formalized. It's a statement that we are professionals and have a right to become even better."

A Welcome Reception

Brannan worked to make the center a reality from the time of its conception. She volunteered to help investigate the need for a center and now serves on the center's board of directors. The program has met with overwhelming acceptance from ESP members, she says.

Carol Brannan helped make the ESP Center a reality. Left: Brannan works with Kelly Green, a student assistant at Central Michigan University.



Going the Extra Mile

High-Tech Tactics

Two local Associations are using technology to reach out to current and potential members of the Association.

The Nazareth Area Educational Support Personnel Association in Pennsylvania used a \$3,500 NEA ESP Technology Grant to purchase a laptop computer, software, and a printer, which it uses to publish a local newsletter.

The newsletter provides members with job information, Association news, and information about members' activities in the community. The newsletter helps increase members' awareness about the benefits of belonging to the Association, says **Debra Maher**, president of the local. "Better communication leads

to a better organization of ESP," she says.

Meanwhile, the Tucson Education Association (TEA) in Arizona used a \$3,500 NEA ESP Technology Grant to expand its technology program. Association members **Ruth Argraves** and **Jay Adkins**, who applied for the grant, have helped the program grow during the past five years.

TEA used the grant to purchase computers and software to use in Association workshops on leadership, politics, and public education. The local also uses the computers to present PowerPoint® slide shows at its board meetings and in the district's 100 schools where the local wants to recruit new members. The presentations inform members and potential mem-

bers about the benefits of belonging to TEA.

The local also updated its website to enhance communication among members and inform them about activities and training programs.

For more information on NEA ESP Technology grants, visit www.nea.org/esphome/members/techgrnt.html. Apply by April 15, 2003, for the 2003-04 grants.

New Jersey ESP Elected to State Board

New Jersey custodian **Lee Flanagan** was elected trustee of the New Jersey Public Employees Retirement System last summer. He started his term in September.

Flanagan is a 24-year

employee with the Plainfield Board of Education. For five years, he has served as the head custodian of Plainfield High School.

In addition, he is chairman of the NJEA Educational Support Professionals Committee and a member of the NJEA Delegate Assembly. Flanagan also has served on the Executive Board of the Plainfield Education Association since 1991.

NJEA staff and members vigorously campaigned for Flanagan who received 8,345 votes and triumphed over two other qualified candidates.

The nine-member Board of Trustees oversees the state retirement system, approves retirements, and reviews disability claims.

Acceptance has come from other important quarters as well—notably the Michigan State Board of Education. Tom Watkins, the state superintendent of education, spoke at MEA's ESP Conference last year and called the certificate program "something that's been long overdue" for public school support staff.

The Curriculum

The level one certificate program requires course work in four basic areas:

- **Communication**—Designed to help participants understand their colleagues and express themselves, the communication curriculum covers work-related writing, team-building, and foreign language instruction.
- **Legal/Ethical**—This curriculum focuses on the protections, privileges, rights, and responsibilities provided by federal and state law to people in educational institutions.
- **Behavior Management**—Course work here involves effective strategies for managing student behavior and covers subjects such as conflict resolution and crisis intervention and response.
- **Growth and Development**—This curriculum emphasizes an understanding of human growth and development—normal and abnormal—to help school personnel better understand and respond to various situations in the school setting. Topics include age-appropriate behavior, learning styles, and human relations.

In addition, certificate program participants may take up to 20 hours of elective courses in areas such as cultural diversity, technology, special education, and safety. At this point, ESP members must pay for their own classes; but, courses are relatively inexpensive, ranging from \$30 to \$40 for five to eight credit hours.

A Wisconsin Model

In researching an effective professional education program for ESPs, MEA looked in part to neighboring Wisconsin. There, the Wisconsin Education Association Council created the Professional Development Academy in 1992 and launched an ESP certificate program in the mid-'90s. More than 5,000 ESPs in Wisconsin have completed the program and received certificates. The program is so well respected that some school districts offer pay incentives to ESPs for earning a certificate.

"Wisconsin helped us a great deal in developing a curriculum," says Brannan. "And we're ready to help others. That's the great thing. The more we work for recognition as professionals, the better it is for ESPs throughout the nation." ✓

—Matt Simon

For more: E-mail David Crim at dcrim@mea.org.

[PROFILE]

Taking Care Of Children

Name: Darlene Yarnelle

Job Title: School nurse, Portage Middle School and Price and Nebraska elementary schools, Fort Wayne, Indiana

What I Do in My Job: I do lots of things, especially because I work in low socioeconomic schools. I take care of children, and I often become their families' medical person. I am responsible for immunizations and medical screenings. I do health presentations, and I also work with staff with medical issues.

The Most Rewarding Part of My Job: Being with children and helping them every day. I feel that I am a lucky person and that every day is rewarding.

Why I Do What I Do: I feel it's a calling. I have the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. I am taught more than I teach.

My Greatest Passion: It has always been children and understanding people.

My Favorite Pastime: Working with the enneagram, which is a personality assessment tool. It tells you about people's different personalities and has helped me understand other people and myself. It also has helped me deal with different types of people.

How I've Helped My Association: I have helped my Association by being a



Tom Strickland

very strong supporter of it. I have a voice in my Association. The nurses in the Association promote health issues. I think that we help children in their school education by taking care of their health.

My Community Involvement

Includes: I am active in my church. I am also involved in committees related to my high school.

A Little Known Fact About Me:

Potato chips are my passion, and it shouldn't be so as a nurse. But, I love them. ✓

RESOURCES

Let's Team Up

The NEA Professional Library has released a new edition of *Let's Team Up! A Checklist for Paraeducators, Teachers, and Principals*. This unique checklist is written to help paraeducators, teachers, and principals understand their roles and responsibilities as they work together. The book includes practical suggestions for paraeducators on clarifying their jobs and their relationships with students and school staff. You can order a copy for \$5.50 by calling 800/229-4200 or visiting <http://home.nea.org/books>.

ESP Conference

The 2003 NEA Education Support Professionals (ESP) Conference will take place March 14-16, 2003, at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. The conference is designed to help NEA ESP members enhance their ability to impact student achievement, build strong internal and external relationships and organizing skills, and provide opportunities for professional development. For more information, call the Education Support Professionals Quality Program at 202/822-7131 or visit www.nea.org/esphome/members/espconf03.html.

Safe Workplace

Looking for information about a safe work environment? Check out the website for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at www.osha.gov. The site offers information about the federal agency and state programs, including information about which state programs cover public sector employees. You'll also find information on workers' rights, ergonomics, and health and safety statistics.

Here's the lowdown on **FREE** NEA DUES-TAB INSURANCE

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DTNT0203

* Active, Staff, Reserve, and Life members.
Retired members are eligible for \$50,000
accident insurance while serving on the
job or as an Association leader.

Surviving the Worst Financial Times

Q: I read about the possibility of having some of my federal student loans cancelled or deferred. Where can I find more information on this?

A: We received several letters on this subject, one from a teacher asking why the forgiveness of loans applied only to those made after Oct. 1, 1998. I searched the Web using www.google.com and asking for "student loan forgiveness teachers," something anyone who is interested in this possibility might do.

One site, www.cbhe.state.mo.us/mostars/loanforgiveness.htm, lists the conditions under which up to \$5,000 of Stafford loans can be forgiven for a teacher who works five years in a low-income school. The site includes a directory of schools that qualify. It seems the program must be renewed each year. All of the sites suggest calling your lender to find out whether you are eligible. As for the Oct. 1 date, there's not much to be said. When Congress gets an idea, it attaches a date to it. It usually has to do with projecting how much the program might cost.

Q: I've had a tax-sheltered account (TSA) in a moderate risk fund for 2.5 years. It hasn't earned a single penny and has lost over \$450 in value. What should I do? Get out of it? Stop

adding money? Can I transfer my money into another company's more conservative fund without paying a fee?

A: The two-and-a-half years between March 2000 and September 2002 when you wrote in were one of the worst times in stock market history. Even financial professionals suffered losses. I suggest you check the performance of your fund against an index like the Standard & Poor's Index of 500 stocks, which lost 36.34 percent from the beginning of March 2000 to the beginning of September 2002. If your fund compares favorably to the index, it's probably a good time to add money to your TSA. The market can't go down forever.

Q: I am concerned for the widower who thinks he can retire at 65. Those of us born in 1946 and after cannot retire on full benefits until we are 66. He might be eligible to retire from his job at 65, but Social Security does not kick in until 66.

A: Thanks for bringing up this excellent point. The change begins with those born in 1938. For them, the normal retirement age moves up to 65 years and two months and then it continues to move up two months each year until it reaches 67 for those born in 1962 and later.

Q: I am a second-year teacher and a divorced mother of three sons. Two of them are getting ready for college. I am having trouble budgeting my finances. It hasn't been easy only getting paid once a month. Do you have any advice?

A: It certainly isn't easy to budget for a whole month. You need help. Does the boys' father contribute to their support? He should. Do the boys work? I know it's tough to balance schoolwork and a job, yet many of the teenagers in the small town where I live do it. If the boys could work 15 hours per week, it would give them spending money and ease up the burden on you. Over the summers, they could accumulate college savings. I hope they are applying for financial aid for college. I've been reading college admissions guides, and it seems the majority of students get some kind of financial aid.

I suggest you sit down with your boys, make a list of priorities, and enlist their support. When kids hear how much money their parents make, it sounds like a fortune. But when they see how much goes to taxes and nonnegotiable items like health insurance and rent or a mortgage, a car plus insurance for both home and car, it's a real eye-opener.

Talk about how you could increase the income as a family. Could you tutor? That pays well. Is there any kind of summer business you could do as a family?

You should be taking money off the top for your 403 (b) plan and then for savings, even if it's only a little. List your nonnegotiable expenses and see what's left. Talk as a family about how that can best be stretched.

We never want our kids to worry about money. But running short of money is a fact of life and kids should understand that and be given the opportunity to help out. ✓

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.



Artville

More than 1.5 million members have registered their beneficiaries for free NEA DUES-TAB Insurance benefits.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Did you know that most NEA members are eligible for free life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance coverage? Since 1985, NEA Member Benefits has offered NEA DUES-TAB® Insurance to Active, Reserve, and Staff members, as well as to Life members actively employed in the field of education. All you have to do to confirm your eligibility and register your beneficiary is call the NEA MB Member Service Center at the numbers below or register online at www.neamb.com.

Providing for your family's security is always a concern, and that's why NEA Member Benefits offers the NEA Preferred Term Life Insurance Plan. Underwritten by the Minnesota Life Insurance Company, the plan features level premiums and level benefits, meaning rates do not increase with age for the life of the policy, and benefits never decrease during the plan term. Coverage is available in two amounts, \$100,000 and \$250,000, for a period of 10, 15, or 20 years.

Rates are attractive, too—for example, a 40-year-old non-smoker in good health could obtain \$250,000 of coverage for as little as \$218 per year. Competitive rates and discounts in other underwriting classes are also available. An "accelerated" benefit rider, automatically included, enables participants who are diagnosed as terminally ill with 12 months or less to live to receive their death benefit right away to use however they wish.

To find out more, call NEA Member Benefits toll-free at 800/637-4636 (voice) or 800/445-1269 (TTY), Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tip comes from Beverly Divarry, a computer lab paraprofessional in State College, Pennsylvania.

So many teachers have complimented my decorative touches that I want to share my bulletin board idea, which is suitable for all teachers.

Use a double roll of vinyl (self-adhesive) wallpaper to cover any bulletin board. Apply the wallpaper horizontally and staple the two strips up.

It looks great, it can take tape as well as staples and push pins, and it is washable and durable. You can also use wallpaper border strips for a terrific border application. Look for rolls on sale for an elegant, inexpensive bulletin board treatment.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

Dose for Dose

Each day some 3 million students in this country receive medication while at school, and increasingly large numbers of these students have complex medical conditions. Yet many school personnel aren't aware of safety and legal issues that surround this important task.

Are any of these scenes familiar to you?

- Children line up to have the school secretary give them their medication while the secretary simultaneously answers phones, performs administrative duties, and responds to parent, teacher, and administrator requests.
- Teachers administer medications to students from envelopes or baggies sent to school by parents with written requests, such as "Please give Suzy one tablet at noon."
- Parents send medication in their child's lunch with verbal instructions like, "Johnny, take the white pill with your lunch."
- Children dig through a pile of medication bottles, select their own, and self-administer their medication.

Fact is, these scenarios play out over and over again at schools across the country. Not surprisingly, the risks for students are high. Researchers report that 75 percent of med-

ications given in schools are administered by someone other than a professionally registered school nurse. When that happens, the research shows, children are three times as likely to miss getting their medication than when a licensed nurse administers it. The data is troublesome and suggests a need for increased awareness among educators about the gamut of legal and safety issues surrounding medication administration at school.



Here are the main issues to know and consider:

- The right of children to receive medications while at school is protected by law.
- Teachers should assist children in their medication management plan.
- Discussion of students' medication needs in front of others violates privacy rights.
- Teachers should know which students are taking medication, the expected outcome of that medication use, possible adverse reactions, and to whom such reactions should be reported.
- Parent permission must be obtained before the school nurse can discuss medical diagnoses and medications with teachers.
- Teachers and support staff can refuse to administer medication they have not been trained to give.

Take this checklist to school!

- The National Association of School Nurses recommends these guidelines to ensure safe medication administration for students.
- Carry this checklist to school and do your part to make sure colleagues are following them regularly and wisely.
- Adhere to written school and district policies and state and federal laws to ensure safe medication administration by trained individuals in compliance with federal and state mandates.
 - Keep medications under lock and key.
 - Only give medication for which there is a written request from the parent or guardian.
 - Give only medication that is in the original container and properly labeled with medication name, dose, route of administration, and dose interval.
 - Always follow the "Five Rights of Medication Administration."
 - Right **child**
 - Right **medication**
 - Right **dosage**
 - Right **time**
 - Right **route**

- Document the date, time, and dosage given and the signature of the person administering the medication.
- Never accept a "no-show," especially for seizure medications and antibiotics.
- Don't allow substitutions or use of one child's medication for another.
- Request training from your school nurse in administration of medications, including use in special situations. These include the use of epi-pens for anaphylactic allergic reactions or extreme respiratory distress, proper metered dose inhaler use for asthma, and medication administration procedures on field trips or while students are being transported. ✓

—Janet Shackelford, B.S.N., N.C.S.N.
National Association of School Nurses

What's Up at HIN?

NEA Health Information Network

TALKING ABOUT SEX

The Sexuality Information and Education Council (SIECUS) of the U.S. recently released a report that could help parents looking to communicate better with their children about sex. Called "Innovative Approaches to Increase Parent-Child Communication about Sexuality," the report is a resource for educators who want to help parents seeking answers. Included in the assessment is HIN's Can We Talk?—¿Conversamos? Program, which educates parents on how to communicate with their children on difficult topics. For more, visit www.siecus.org or call 212/819-9770.

MARIJUANA—STAMPING OUT THE MYTHS

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among America's youth. Despite propaganda to the contrary,

the drug is harmful to developing bodies and minds, and puts kids at risk. The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has launched a new initiative to dispel myths and misconceptions about marijuana and teach prevention. Want to join the campaign? Three websites have been developed. Educators can visit www.teachersguide.org, parents can visit www.theantidrug.com, and youth can visit www.freevibe.com.

BEATING ASTHMA

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released "Strategies for Addressing Asthma Within a Coordinated School Health Program," a new 12-page guide designed to help state and local education and health agencies and schools support students with asthma. It presents six strategies for schools to consider when addressing

asthma within a coordinated school health program. To access the document, visit www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/asthma.htm or call 888/231-6405 for hard copies.

NEW EPA "HEALTHY SCHOOLS" WEB PORTAL

The Environmental Protection Agency has launched a new webpage intended to serve as a portal for online "healthy schools" resources. The portal is designed to help people who are addressing environmental health issues in schools. Numerous ideas and resources are available on the site. Visitors can browse by topic or by geographic area, or search all resources by entering specific keywords into the search box at the top of each page. Visit <http://epa.gov/schools>.



FOR MORE:

Visit the National Association of School Nurses website at www.nasn.org or call 866/627-6767.

Matters Of the Heart

If you're totally stressed, can't remember the last time you took a brisk walk, are eating way too much—and you're a woman—consider yourself a good candidate for heart disease.

After decades of being identified as mainly a man's concern, heart disease has finally caught up with American women. And for educators—85 percent of whom are women—it's hardly a fact to tuck under the test papers and forget.

Heart disease now surpasses breast cancer as the number one killer of women, according to The American Heart Association (AHA). In fact, half a million women will die this year from it, far surpassing heart-related deaths for men.

How did this preventable disease make such a lethal descent on women? Dr. Rose Marie Robertson, professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University and former president of the American Heart Association, says the problem has actually been growing steadily over the years, as more women have taken on high-stress jobs and become more sedentary and overweight. And while men still are at high risk—it's their number one killer after cancer—women are often the ones who remain in the dark about the disease.



No, not me

Unfortunately, experts say, many women miss the early warning signs. "Most women just don't think about heart disease as something that can affect them," says Robertson. According to one survey, only 8 percent of American women believe heart disease and stroke are health threats that apply to them. While most women were aware of the classic signals of a heart attack—shortness of breath, tightness in the chest and pain in the arm—many were unaware of specific signals for women. Nausea, fatigue, dizziness, vomiting, and neck and shoulder pain can indicate a problem specifically for women. Even chest pains may be different; they may be light twinges that come and go, or simply be so vague a woman is inclined to dismiss them. Don't!

But I'm so young!

The risk of heart disease increases as you grow older because estrogen—which older women stop producing—is believed to somehow help shield the arteries. But that doesn't mean Generation Xers should ignore the disease. Incidents of sudden cardiac arrests are now occurring in women 15 to 34 years old, so be aware.

The culprits

Smoking, poor eating habits that lead to high cholesterol, lack of exercise, and excess weight are all bad news—and they are highly destructive factors that increase the risks of heart disease. "Our environments don't foster healthy living," says Robertson. "We have become extremely sedentary."

Another culprit, especially in the African-American community, is hypertension. According to the AHA, hypertension escalates the symptoms of heart disease. So does diabetes. A recent report by the National Women's Health Resource Center says diabetic women are three to seven times more likely to have a heart attack and are twice as vulnerable to a second attack.

Stress and a family history of heart disease are also both significant factors. Even body type can raise your risk: If your waist is nearly as large as, or larger, than your hips, this could be a problem—even if you're not overweight.

Beyond the Big Attack

Heart attacks are more lethal than other heart disorders, but the others are important to know because they can be just as deadly if left untreated. They include angina, a decrease in oxygen flow to the heart; Silent X, an irregular dilation of small blood vessels; and cardiac arrhythmias, which cause irregular heartbeats. If left unchecked these heart abnormalities can eventually lead to strokes and heart attacks.

Protect that ticker

While staying heart healthy may seem like yet another chore, it's one of the most important things you can do. "You are in training for your life," says Robertson. Become more familiar with the risk factors and your family history, kick the bad eating to the curb, and regularly monitor your cholesterol. ✓

—Leah Lakins

FOR MORE:

Visit www.healthywomen.org and www.americanheart.org.

HEALTHY BITES

■ BROWN BAGGIN' IT

Fall in love with leftovers! They are easy, convenient, and can provide a lot of nutrition. Even if leftovers means a couple of pieces of take-out pizza from the night before, you can work with it. Chicken, ham, or veggies are good topping choices, and you can order them with "half the usual amount of cheese, please." Pack a container of pre-bagged salad mix, or baby carrots and sugar snap peas, and you're set.

Another idea: When you cook, make extra, then freeze lunch-size portions. Heart-healthy warmers for this time of year include chili made with beans, and lentil or split pea soup with vegetables (lean ham optional). You can boost the power of the iron in those legumes if the recipe is tomato-based, or includes vinegar, lemon, or red wine.

■ INSPIRE ME!

I have been walking 4 miles a day, every day, for a year and a half. These walks have helped my husband and I survive cancer, meningitis, and a deep vein thrombosis (blood clot), while getting us more healthy in soul, mind, and body.

—Dr. Monica M. Rogerson
Carver Elementary School
Long Beach, California

■ GOOD QUESTION!

Q: What types of cooking oils are best?

A: When choosing cooking oil, monounsaturated oils are the best. Some good sources: olive, canola, safflower, sesame, peanut, and walnut oils. All of these oils are healthy additions to your diet, but use in moderation. One serving of oil equals one teaspoon, so try to use cooking sprays made with these oils or use an oil mister to control the amount you use.

TALK TO US

This is the fifth in a series of articles designed to help NEA members develop healthy habits that tackle stress and overeating. Questions or comments: e-mail mmilloy@nea.org.

Heart Healthy For Life

Your heart is the life center of your body. To help it be its best, make a real effort to "do the right thing." Start with these tips:

Stop smoking

- See a health professional if you're drinking heavily
- Build a network of friends who give you emotional support
- Monitor caloric intake, cholesterol, and blood pressure
- Eat more Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish and nuts)
- Eat high-fiber foods instead of high-fat junk food
- Get moving! It promotes weight loss and relieves stress



Illustrations by Images.com

Rock On

The halls are alive with the sound of music at Moore Elementary School in Clarksville, Tennessee, thanks to the generosity of music teacher **Charlie Winkler**. Last summer, Winkler sold his original 1959 Fender Stratocaster®, the same type of guitar used by rock legends Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton, for \$6,000. He used the money to purchase 32 half-size guitars and a public address system for Moore's music program.

"I had played that guitar all of my life, and I wanted to put it to good use," Winkler says. Before becoming a teacher, Winkler jammed with the 1960s girl group Martha and the Vandellas and two local bands, The Three Pixies and The Last Train.

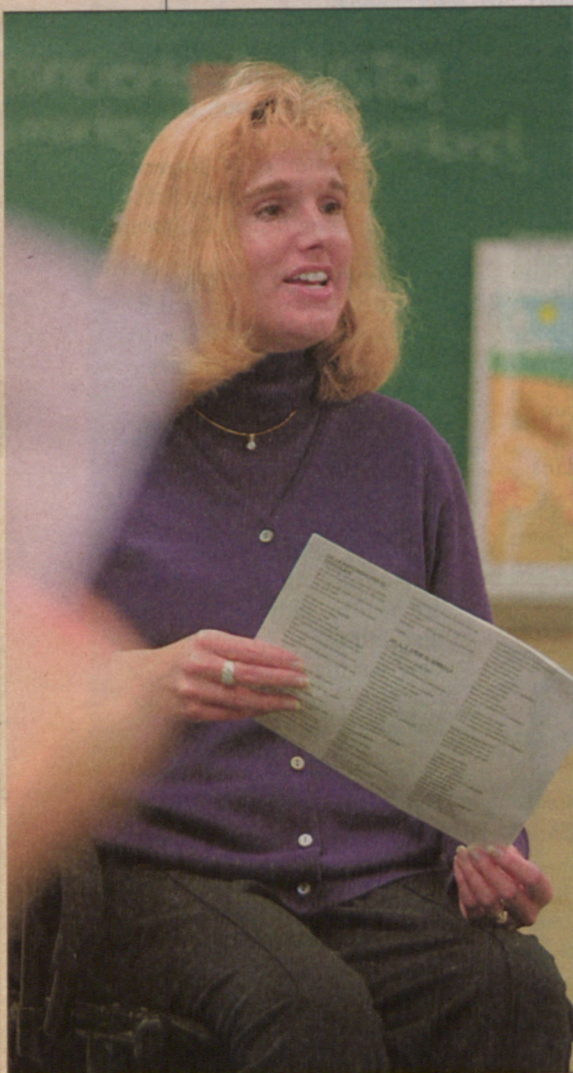
Now, students in grades one through five can follow in Winkler's footsteps. Students will have the opportunity to play the guitars once each week and even learn a few riffs to their favorite songs. Winkler hopes this new component of the music program, which also includes lessons on music theory, sight reading, and the history of rock 'n' roll, will help students improve their reading and math skills as well.

"I hope my students will take this knowledge with them for the rest of their lives and gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for what goes into music," he says. ✓

—Leah Lakins



Photos by Dan Loflin



Ron Alvey

A Little Inspiration

Helping people comes naturally to **Amy Dunaway-Haney**, a Spanish teacher at Kettering Fairmont High School in Dayton, Ohio. When she isn't sponsoring one of the school clubs or providing weekend community counseling, she finds innovative ways to get her students excited about learning and volunteering.

In September, the Muscular Dystrophy Association awarded Dunaway-Haney the 2003 National Personal Achievement Award for her community service efforts—efforts that her students have emulated.

Dunaway-Haney can recall hundreds of moments in her 11-year career when her students volunteered their time to help others. Often, the acts are simple. Students collect homework during class and staple worksheets for Dunaway-Haney, who was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at age eight and uses a wheelchair in her classroom.

She also has inspired many students to volunteer as counselors at the MDA summer camp. As a child and teen, Dunaway-Haney spent her own summers at the camp swimming, riding horses, and performing other physical activities she had trouble doing on her own without the adapted facilities the camp offers.

Many of her student volunteers since have chosen careers that help the community. Her class roster includes a police officer, a nurse in a head trauma unit, an occupational therapist, and even a genetic engineer seeking a cure for muscular dystrophy.

"I don't have children of my own," Dunaway-Haney says. "But this is how parents must feel when their kids go off and do something wonderful in the world." ✓

—Mary M. Kershaw

Celebrating Black History

NEA-Retired member **Shirley Pitts** helps spread the word about Black history as director of the Black History Tour Group, a program she founded as an active teacher at Jackson High School (Michigan) that has become a major focus of her life in retirement.

"This program has really blossomed since we began in 1994," says Pitts. "Everybody is just floored by what these kids are doing."

What they do is teach about Black history and culture through songs, skits, poems, and dramatic readings. About 30 students comprise the group, which performs regularly at schools, nursing homes, and other venues.





Michael York

Sweet Success

Paraprofessional **David Hurley** and the students at East Belfast Elementary School in Belfast, Maine, know all about sticky situations. When Hurley decided to build an entry for the city's Bearfest auction completely out of gummy bears, he had no idea how popular the sticky delight would become.

"Kids were intrigued by the idea of the project, and some of them were just thrilled to be around candy," Hurley says.

Hurley entered the annual event, which raises money for various local charities and organizations, to inspire togetherness throughout the school. He received grants from local merchants to purchase materials to build the bear and cover it with tons of gummy treats. Then Hurley, also known as the "gummy bear guy," let students apply the gummy bears onto a fiberglass bear coated with wet, sticky caulking.

Six weeks and more than 10,000 chewy treats later, the children and staff had created a five-and-a-half-foot gummy bear—all covered with several layers of marine epoxy.

The giant gummy bear earned \$950 at the Bearfest auction and enjoyed a window display at a local candy store. Half the proceeds from the auction will go toward a new playground for the school.

"I hope this project has inspired my kids to be creative and learn to communicate themselves in various ways," Hurley says of the sweet creation. ✓

—Leah Lakins

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Kristen Loschert, section editor, at kloschert@nea.org.

Going the Distance

When **Jeanette Marquardt** announced that she planned to run 26.2 miles in Negril, Jamaica, to raise money for the American Stroke Association, her friends and family members thought she was crazy. Or at least, not being serious. But Marquardt, an administrative receptionist for the Northshore school district near Seattle, Washington, was more than serious. She was dedicated to supporting a cause that had touched her personally.

"I am doing the marathon in honor of my mother, who has had several strokes," Marquardt says. "I am excited about running this marathon on behalf of the many people who couldn't even walk it."

Marquardt began training for the December 7 run back in July, after receiving information about the marathon in the mail. Her regimen included running and lifting weights six days a week and weekly training sessions with a team of other marathon participants.

The \$4,600 she raised to participate in the run will help fund research, advocacy, and education programs sponsored by the American Stroke Association. Friends, fellow education support professionals, and other co-workers donated most of the money.

"My hope is that the American Stroke Association will be able to find ways that permit my mother and many others to lead better lives," she says. ✓

—Irene Arce

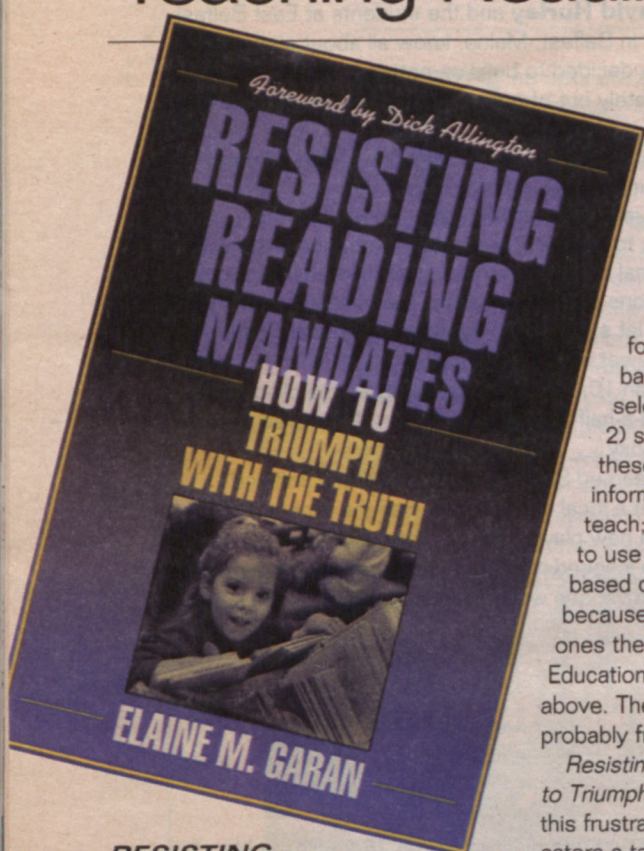


Photos by Ellen Banner



Robert Chase

Teaching Reading: Fighting for What You Know



RESISTING READING MANDATES: HOW TO TRIUMPH WITH THE TRUTH

By Elaine M. Garan

128 pp. \$15 paperback; Heinemann (www.heinemann.com)

EXCERPT

"The [National Reading Panel] report is not just some pesky little mosquito buzzing in our ears. It is Godzilla and it has its foot on our heads. Like it or not, we must deal with the findings of the National Reading Panel. And so we shall, by meeting them on their own ground."

A new book urges educators to resist caving in to federally anointed reading programs at the expense of methods they know work.

If you teach reading, it's likely that you are: 1) being ordered to follow a reading curriculum based on a currently popular selection of reading research; 2) struggling to make room in these programs for your own informed view about how to teach; 3) feeling new pressure to use only reading programs based on "scientific research" because those are the only the ones the U.S. Department of Education will fund; or 4) all of the above. The result, in any event, is probably frustration and confusion.

Resisting Reading Mandates: How to Triumph With the Truth seizes on this frustration by giving reading educators a tool for using what they know, and fighting back. Cleverly, Elaine Garan uses the very document that ruffled her feathers—*The Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*—as the battery in this tool. It is, after all, the NRP report that defines the "scientific research" now driving the reading recommendations in the Bush Administration's new education plan. Garan plucks from the panel's findings to help educators defend their professional autonomy. Significantly, she tries to show how the panel's executive summary actually contradicts the findings of the report itself.

Garan promises readers that her book will "empower" them. "It will enable you to hold a mirror to the scientific claims made in the Bush Education Plan and refute them using the National Reading Panel's own words," she says.

Garan, no doubt, has firmly held biases. Yet she represents the thinking of many reading researchers and teachers who believe that research being embraced by federal policy makers is limited, even misinterpreted. Readers, then, must judge for themselves the validity of Garan's analysis. Still, they will find the core of her book—the verbatim references from the NRP report—useful and sound.

The book begins with background on the reading panel, followed by dozens of questions Garan solicited from educators concerned with everything from teaching comprehension and phonemic awareness to the value of specific commercial programs such as Open Court and Direct Instruction. For each question, Garan serves up an answer with a direct quote from the NRP report. This quote is largely meant to be ammunition for educators who want to make a point—to administrators, to policy makers, to parents—about a view of reading instruction they support.

Garan explicitly maps out how she wants readers to use the book. She

urges them to get copies of the report online. Then, for each issue she tackles that's relevant to them, she tells what to do.

Under her book's section "NRP's Support for Investing in Classroom Libraries," Garan discusses what the NRP says about promoting comprehension and access to books, then gives a page citation from the report itself. Garan tells the reader to find that page in the report, mark it with a sticky note, and highlight the quotes she has offered. A handy list of the studies the NRP examined, additional references, and an index help make this an easy-to-follow process.

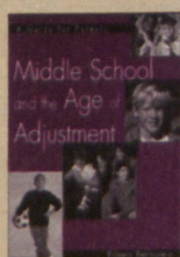
Some teachers will want to read *Resisting Mandates* from cover to cover. The points Garan makes and her perceptions of the process for anointing certain reading programs is fascinating. Others will simply want to use the book for an occasional reference. But that's fine, too. After all, this is not a how-to book, but rather a book that explores the thinking that currently is driving reading instructional decisions. It will not tell educators how to help students learn to read. It will, however, give information to support programs and decisions likely to help all children learn and love to read. ✓

—Barbara Kapinus
NEA Student Achievement
Department

BOOKS by NEA Members

Middle School and the Age of Adjustment: A Guide for Parents

By Eileen Bernstein



A resource for any parent with a child in middle school. Parents need to be aware of the physical, emotional, and social challenges their children face in middle school so they can help them deal with adolescent issues. The author, a middle school counselor, provides suggestions for how to guide children and help them deal with these inevitable trials. 176 pp. \$36.95 from Greenwood Publishing Group. To order, go to www.greenwood.com/books/BookDetail.asp?dept_id=1&sku=H906.

The Tomb of the Boy King

By John Frank



A narrative poem about the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb, this book is full of detail and wonderful colorful illustrations. The author, who teaches in a gifted-child program, weaves together the facts and mystery behind King Tut and describes what Howard Carter found in the Valley of the Kings. \$16 plus \$4.50 s&h. To order, call 888/330-8477, or write to Farrar, Straus & Giroux, c/o Von Holtzbrink Publishing Services, 1635 James Madison Highway, Gordonsville, VA 22942.

Don't Sweat It! Every Body's Answers to Questions You Don't Want to Ask

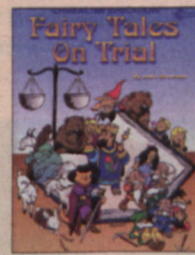
By Marguerite Crump



From the dish on deodorant to the skinny on skin, this guide uses humor, gross facts, curious myths, and friendly tips to reassure preteens that hygiene can make a big difference in how they feel. Written by a health and physical education teacher, the book covers the personal health issues that can be hard for preteens to talk about and teaches kids how to take care of themselves. 128 pp. \$13.95 from Free Spirit Publishing. To order, go to www.freespirit.com or call 800/735-7323.

Fairy Tales On Trial

By Janis Silverman



With this book, students learn about character and law by simulating investigations and trials based on fairy tales. Through the mock trials, students examine the fine line between "doing wrong" and crime. The author, who teaches gifted third through fifth graders in reading and math, provides activities that challenge students as they use language arts, critical reading, analytical thinking, writing, speaking, and drama skills. 64 pp. \$10.95 plus s&h from Pieces of Learning. To order, go to <http://piecesoflearning.com/store/page9.html> or call 800/729-5137.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Teaching Tolerance

Educators can sign up for a free subscription to *Teaching Tolerance*, a semi-annual magazine that supports K-12 teachers' efforts to promote respect for differences and appreciation of diversity. Published by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the

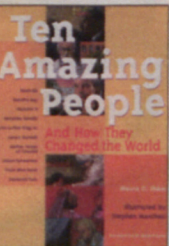


publication includes innovative tolerance initiatives in schools across the country, teaching tools, and idea exchanges. Lesson plans and other

anti-bias materials can be found at the magazine's companion website at www.teachingtolerance.org. To order, fax a request on school letterhead to 334/956-8486, or send via mail to Teaching Tolerance, Order Department, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

Inspired By Familiar Faces

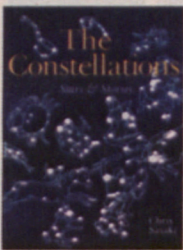
Malcolm X, Dorothy Day, Desmond Tutu—author Maura D. Shaw inspires kids to learn about some of the world's greatest leaders in *Ten Amazing People*. The book includes timelines of important events,



punchy biographies, and richly illustrated collages. 48 pp. \$17.95 from Skylight Paths Publishing. To order, call 800/962-4544.

Bus Boycott Video

Through this 40-minute video, students in grades 5 and up can view Rosa Parks' descendants and witnesses to the Alabama Bus Boycott, as they recount how Montgomery citizens banded together to end segregation on city buses. Free to educators, *Mighty Times: The Legacy of Rosa Parks* includes a viewer's guide and can be ordered by having your principal, department chair, or director send a request on school letterhead to Mighty Times, Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104 or by fax to 334/956-8486.



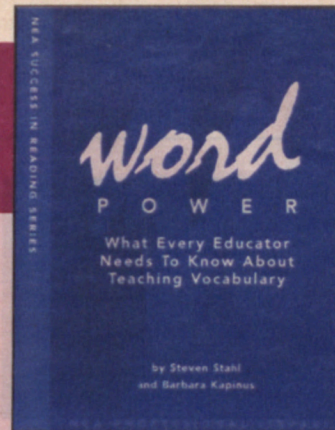
Stargazing for Stories

The night sky is filled with bedtime stories about a lion and her cub, a king, a swan, a flying fish, a unicorn.

Chris Sasaki's *The Constellations: Stars & Stories* brings to life the stories of 88 constellations young readers can find on a clear evening right in their backyards. 128 pp. \$24.95 from Sterling Publishing. To order, go to www.sterlingpub.com.

Good Morning to You

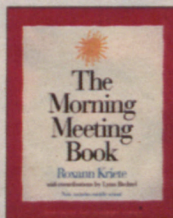
K-8 teachers across the nation have discovered a new way to start class in the mornings that brings the classroom together in a circle to greet each other and share news and ideas. *The Morning Meeting Book* by Roxann Kriete provides step-by-step



EXCERPT

Looking up words in a dictionary is not an effective way of improving students' comprehension. Dictionaries can be a useful adjunct to word learning, however, if used correctly. Consider the following strategies:

- Use dictionaries after a student reads a word in context, rather than before.
- Teach students about dictionary definitions.
- Try some nontraditional dictionaries, such as the COBUILD English dictionary.
- Have fun with definitions, such as The Word of the Day on the Oxford English Dictionary Web site.



instructions, along with meeting ideas and variations, for teachers who want to begin the day with a Morning Meeting. 224 pp. \$17.95 from the Northeast Foundation for Children. To order, call 800/360-6332 or visit www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Surfing for Fresh Ideas

Find websites about every topic from

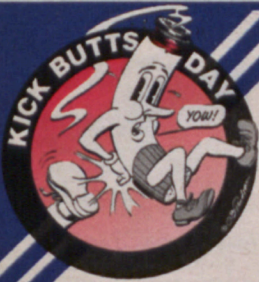
From the NEA Professional Library

Word Power: What Every Educator Needs To Know About Teaching Vocabulary
158 pp. \$15.95 NEA members
\$19.95 nonmembers
#2022-7-00-PL

A good vocabulary is one of the major building blocks for success in reading, and every content area has vocabulary to master. Whether you teach math, literature, or science, *Word Power* offers K-12 classroom teachers proven techniques for effective vocabulary instruction. Find out how to increase the vocabulary and content understanding of students, involve them more actively in word learning, and guide students toward the deep understanding of words that comes from thoughtful learning rather than rote memorization. *Word Power* gives teachers the tools they need to turn their students into "wordophiles," by verifying what all readers know—there's a vital link between a love of words and a love of reading.

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books

journalism to special education to drama in *The Best Web Sites for Teachers*. Authors Vicki Sharp, Martin Levine, and Richard Sharp provide up-to-date URLs for more than 1,200 sites teachers can use in and out of the classroom. 278 pp. \$31.45 from ISTE. To order, call 800/336-5191 or visit www.iste.org/bookstore.



Every day, more than 2,000 kids become new, regular daily smokers. One in three will die prematurely. Together, teachers and students can break this deadly cycle.

Kick Butts Day

April 2, 2003

TURN THE TIDE

DROWN OUT BIG TOBACCO

NEA HIN & Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Kick Butts Day 2003
Activity Guide Request Form

Name: _____
Ms./Mr./Mrs. First Middle Last
Organization/School: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Country: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
E-mail: _____
Number of guides requested (limit of 3) _____
Sign up online at kickbuttsday.org or complete this form and return to:

CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS
Attn: Kick Butts Day Activity Guide
1400 I Street, NW, Suite 1200 • Washington, DC 20005 or
Fax: 866-889-7108

Join with the NEA Health Information Network and the **CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS** to demand a healthy future for America's youth.

Teachers all across the country will unite with thousands of kids, parents and community leaders on Kick Butts Day to fight tobacco addiction and secondhand smoke.

Visit kickbuttsday.org or complete the request form to receive your free activity guide which will help you plan a successful Kick Butts Day event. You can also take action at TobaccoFreeTeachers.org.

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
www.nea.org
Making Public Schools Great for Every Child

CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS

NEA HIN
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK

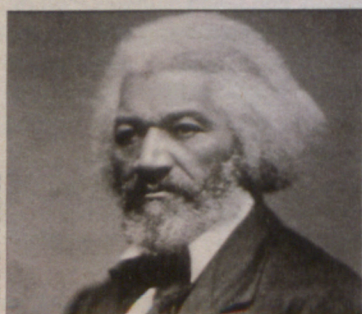
Resources

TVTIPS

TV Tips are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and from Cable in the Classroom at www.ciconline.org.

Biography: Frederick Douglass

A&E, February 10, 7 a.m., ET. This episode shows the key role Frederick Douglass, a former slave, played in the fight against slavery, including his work editing an abolitionist newspaper, recruiting Blacks for service during the Civil War, and conferring with President Lincoln. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.



National Archives



Unchained Memories: Readings from Slave Narratives

HBO, February 10, 8 p.m., ET. From 1936 to 1938, more than 2,000 interviews with one-time slaves were conducted for the Federal Writers' Project with the transcripts forming a unique record of slave life. This 90-minute documentary brings these words to life through on-camera readings by African-American actors, as well as archival photographs, music, film, and period images. Educators can go to HBO.com for information about access to primary documents, and curriculum and library activities for kids.

The Future of the Milky Way
Discovery Channel (Assignment Discovery), February 14, 9 a.m., ET.

Featuring dramatic animation, this program explores the origins of the Milky Way Galaxy, including the search for a massive black hole at the galaxy's core. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year with a lesson plan at <http://school.discovery.com>.

Animal Magnetism and Animal Behavior

National Geographic Channel, February 14, 8 and 9 p.m., ET. This show studies the behavior of animal mating and examines just how similar human and animal behaviors really are. In the game of courtship, are females the power players? Scientists are discovering that animals, like humans, solve problems with mental pictures, make tools, and communicate with sound.



National Geographic Television



Erik Freeland/ITVS

On This Island

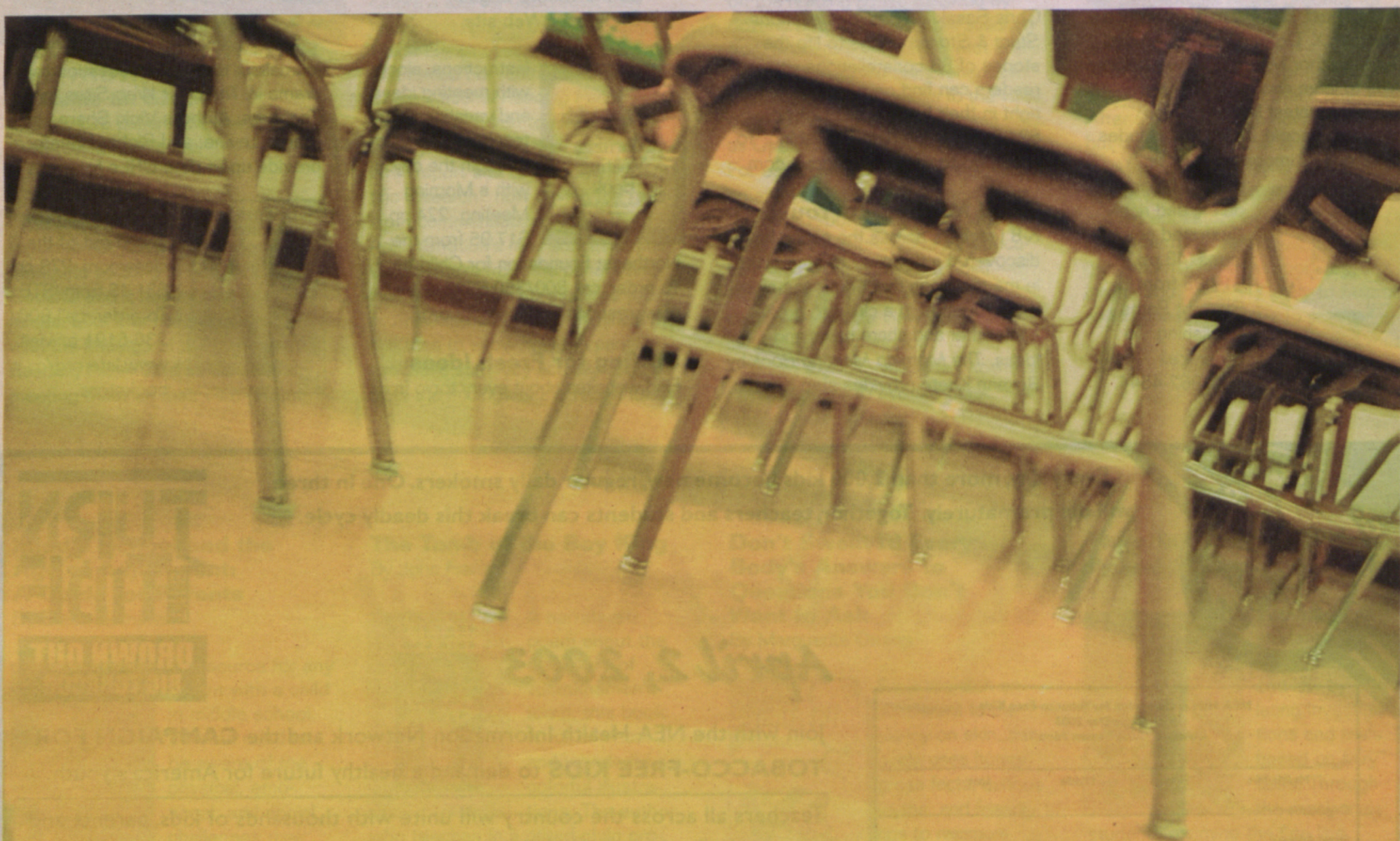
PBS, Independent Lens series, February 18, 10 p.m., ET, check local listings.

On an isolated island off the coast of Maine, a disagreement about arts education threatens to tear apart a once close-knit community until a former Broadway producer attempts to heal the rift through the staging and performance of an original musical based on the islanders' stories. Watch the musical's creation and eventual success in this documentary.

The Music Man

ABC, February 23, 7 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Matthew Broderick and Kristin Chenoweth star in this made-for-tel-



Need a Grant? Don't Wait.

The NEA Foundation gives over 300 grants a year to fund your BIG ideas. Our ongoing application process makes it easier than ever to get a grant. Apply today at www.nfie.org or call 202.822.7840. Small grants can lead to BIG change.

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Chase Bank, Texas

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valid 11/27/02

World Savings, California

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APY**
(36-month term)
valid 11/27/02

NEA yield is subject to change weekly.
Other banks' yields are shown for
comparison purposes only.

Simple arithmetic

As an NEA member, you don't have to do complicated calculations to figure out how to earn yields that have consistently ranked among the highest in the nation. All you have to do is open an NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD offered by MBNA America Bank. You'll not only enjoy a great yield on your deposit, you can also rest assured knowing your savings are FDIC-insured up to \$100,000 per depositor.

What's more, you can take advantage of a low minimum opening deposit of just \$1,000 – and additional terms from 6 to 60 months. So if you or a member of your family† would like to earn a great yield on your deposit, forget the complicated calculations and opt for the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD. For current rates, to open an account, or to inquire about Traditional or Roth IRAs, call MBNA today. Or visit us at www.neamb.com



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Please mention priority code JA07Y

NEA yield shown is valid only between 12/2/02-12/8/02 and is subject to change weekly. Other banks' yields are valid 11/27/02 and are shown for comparison purposes only. Please call MBNA for current NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD rates or visit www.neamb.com

*The NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is valid from 12/2/02 – 12/8/02, based on a \$1,000 minimum opening deposit, a term of 36 months and assumes that interest remains in the account until maturity. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal of CD principal. Withdrawals and fees may reduce earnings.

**All other bank APYs shown in the comparison chart are valid as of 11/27/02, based on balances of \$2,500 and a term of 36 months. Source – Informa Research Services, 11/27/02.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

The NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates through the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD. If eligible, a replacement account will be offered.

Absolutely no membership dues are used to market this program.

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Resources

evision movie of the Meredith Willson musical. Professor Harold Hill, played by Broderick, waltzes into River City, Iowa, mesmerizing its citizens with the need for a boys' marching band. He cons parents into buying his expensive instruments and uniforms, convincing them that his revolutionary music training program will turn their children into virtuoso perform-

ers. Chaos ensues when Hill is about to be uncovered and must prove himself.

Save Our History: The Underground Railroad
History Channel, February 24 and 25, 6 a.m., ET.
Hosted by actor Alfre Woodard, this two-part program uses slaves' engravings, songs, and diary entries

to chronicle the story of America's first civil-rights movement and profiles some of the prominent figures of the Underground Railroad, including Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The program can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with a lesson plan available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

WEB WINNERS

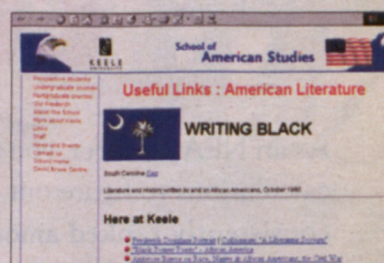
Scholarships for Hispanics

This new website from NEA and the Hispanic Press Foundation makes more than 1,000 sources of financial aid more easily accessible to Hispanic students around the country and world. The site includes application guidelines, an alumni section, and a database of scholarships fully searchable by a variety of categories, including state, college, and field of interest. The website extends the usefulness of the Hispanic Press Foundation directory, making scholarship information for Hispanics readily available throughout the United States. Many of the scholarships listed are available not only to U.S. citizens but to any student of Hispanic descent, regardless of nationality. Go to www.scholarshipsforhispanics.org.



Writing Black

Keele University's American Literature Department has compiled a list of links to important works by Black Americans along with other online resources about Black writers. Authors include Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Frederick Douglass, and more. Go to www.keele.ac.uk/depts/as/Literature/amlit.black.html.



Bite-sized Ed News

This weekly newsletter, available by e-mail, includes condensed versions of the most important education-related news stories found in various print and online sources. The information can be read in less than 10 minutes, which is convenient for educators with busy schedules. Go to www.edbriefs.com.



What type of investor are you? Take this NEA Valuebuilder quiz and find out.

Take just a moment and write the numbers corresponding to your answers in the spaces to the right. Add up your score and then match it with the Investor Profile to learn if you're a conservative, moderate or aggressive investor.

NEA Valuebuilder Program

Risk Pop Quiz

A Of my gross household income, I spend the following percentage on debts like credit card, car payments, rent or mortgage payments:

1. More than 33%
2. Between 10% and 33%
3. Less than 10%

B In case of an emergency, I have savings available to pay:

1. Less than two months of living expenses
2. Two to four months of living expenses
3. Five months or more of living expenses

C The chance that I may lose my job or face a large financial burden in the next year is:

1. Somewhat likely
2. Not very likely
3. Not likely at all

D Regarding the risk of investing, I will change to another investment if:

1. There is any drop in value
2. The value drops by 20% during a given year
3. It doesn't bother me if my investment drops in value. I might even buy more since prices are lower.

E The majority of my money is currently invested in:

1. CDs, Passbook Savings, Money Market Funds or Treasury Bonds
2. Stocks from large corporations, mutual funds that are pretty reliable, or high-quality corporate bonds.
3. Predominantly small company stocks or aggressive mutual funds.

F Regarding my investment objectives:

1. I prefer a guaranteed account, one where my money is absolutely safe, even if it means I earn a lower rate.
2. I want investments that show steady growth. I need to beat inflation so I'm willing to take some risk.
3. I prefer a more aggressive mix of investments, some with moderate growth, but mostly those with higher risk and the chance for higher returns.

Question Answer

A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	

+
Total Score

Add up your total score and match it with your Investor Profile

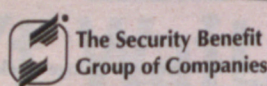
Total Score	Investor Profile
6-9	Conservative Investor
10-15	Moderate Investor
16-18	Aggressive Investor

Now, take the next step.

Knowing your financial risk tolerance is a good beginning toward preparing for your retirement. Now is the time to take the next important step - meet with your NEA Valuebuilder® representative. You'll get guidance from a financial professional who can help you match an investment portfolio to your risk tolerance and time horizon.

Receive a FREE Planner. Call now to set up an appointment with an NEA Valuebuilder Representative and you'll receive a free Daily Planner and Retirement Planning Guide. Call toll-free today.

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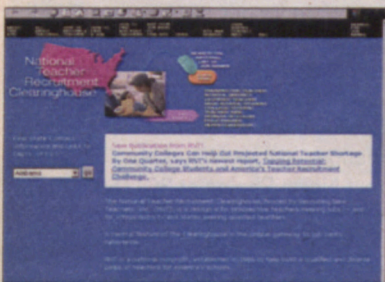
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For more complete information about the NEA Valuebuilder Variable Annuity TSA available through the NEA Valuebuilder Program, including all charges and expenses, obtain a prospectus from Security Distributors, Inc. and read it carefully before investing. Variable annuities available through the NEA Valuebuilder Program are distributed by Security Distributors, Inc. and issued by Security Benefit Life Insurance Company. The NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund TSA is a Custodial Account that makes available various mutual funds for investment. For more complete information about the mutual funds in which the Custodial Account invests, obtain a prospectus from Security Distributors, Inc. and read it carefully before investing. NEA Valuebuilder is a registered trademark of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation.

VBNT0203

Need Help Finding a Job?

The National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse, hosted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., simplifies the task of recruiting, placing, and retaining teachers in America's public schools by helping aspiring teachers find certification and employment information. Go to www.recruitingteachers.org.



News for Teens

More than 68 percent of teens search for news online. Direct them to a trusted source at NewsHour Extra, a companion site to PBS' *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. The site provides interactive news stories, lesson plans that meet national curriculum standards, and context and informa-



tion so students can understand how world events impact their lives. Go to www.pbs.org/newshour/extra.

Getting Smart About Money

Help young students become financially literate by guiding them to Planet Orange, where kids explore separate islands that outline the basics of earning, saving, investing,



and spending money. Credit cards, the stock market, and allowance are discussed, and the site features a dictionary of financial terms and a calculator. Go to www.orangekids.com.

Green Thumbs and Grants

Spring will soon be here and what better way to welcome it than planting a school garden? Visit this site for information on how to create, maintain, teach about, and fund a school garden or schoolyard habitat. Sponsored by the National Gardening Association, the site provides classroom project ideas and a list of grants and fund-raising websites, all the while promoting environmental responsibility and multidisciplinary learning. Go to kidsgardening.com.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

College Tuition Assistance

Not all scholarships are for students with excellent grades, low-income families, or the athletically inclined. Millions of dollars of private sector financial aid goes unused because parents and students do not know how or where to apply. The U.S. Commission for Scholastic Assistance—College Bound—has spent hundreds of hours in research locating scholarship sources and has a list of more than 1,000 different private scholarship sources. For information on obtaining these scholarship lists, send a self-addressed, stamped, business size, #10 envelope to: The U.S. Commission for Scholastic Assistance, P.O. Box 668, O'Fallon, IL 62269.

World Refugee Day Poster Contest

Students in grades 4-10 can design a poster around the theme, "Shared Wishes, Shared Dreams: Refugee Youth and Us," for the 2003 World Refugee Day Poster Contest. The

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HFNT0203

contest is open to and will be judged in three age groups: grades 4-5, 6-8, and 9-10. Each entry must be sponsored by a teacher or principal from the student's school. Sponsored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie will offer a prize to the winner in each category. Deadline for entries to be postmarked is March 14, 2003. For more, go to www.usaforunhcr.org/wrd/wrd2003form.htm.

Black History Month Kit

Educators can purchase *The Souls of Black Folk: Centennial Reflections*, a 2003 Black History Month kit from the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). ASALH promotes, researches, preserves, interprets, and disseminates information about Black life, history, and culture to the global community. The kit contains biographical sketches, essays, a poster, and a resource learning package that can be used in a curriculum on Black history.

To purchase the kit, write to the Association for the Study of African

American Life and History, 7961 Eastern Avenue, Suite 301, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or call 301/587-5900. For more information, visit www.asalh.com or e-mail Irena Webster at asalh@earthlink.net. The kit costs \$50, which includes shipping and handling.

Signet Classic Student Scholarship Essay Contest

Five high school juniors or seniors can each win a \$1,000 scholarship award to be used toward their higher education plus a Signet Classic library for their school. Students enter by writing an essay on one of four topics posed for this year's competition book, *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley. Submissions will be judged on style, content, grammar, and originality. Judges will look for clear, concise writing that is original, articulate, logically organized, and well-supported. All essays must be postmarked no later than April 15, 2003. For rules and conditions of the contest, go to www.penguinputnam.com/static/html/us/academic/essayindex.html, or write to Penguin Putnam, Inc.,

Signet Classic Scholarship Essay Contest, 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014.

Riley Teacher Award

Teachers working with a physical disability, dealing with an especially challenging educational environment, or who have performed a heroic act for their students can apply for the Freida J. Riley Teacher Award. The recipient will have achieved great teaching goals despite adversity and will be honored at International Space Day on May 1, 2003, at the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The awardee will receive transportation, hotel, and meal expenses, a sculpture award, and \$10,000 to use as he or she wishes.

The award is sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship and the Partnership for America's Future, Inc. Applications will be accepted until March 5, 2003. For applications or nomination forms, visit www.pafinc.com.

Humane Essay Contest

Students in grades 2-12 can enter The Fund for Animals' annual

National Humane Essay Contest. A \$200 (first prize) and a \$100 (second prize) U.S. savings bond will be awarded to winners chosen in four grade-level categories: grades 2 and 3, grades 4-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12. Elementary school students will write a brief essay on the treatment of performing animals in circuses, while secondary students can write longer essays debating the appropriateness of local ordinances to ban circuses with animal acts.

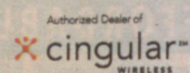
All essays must be received by February 28, 2003. For more information, visit www.fund.org or contact Norm Phelps at 301/585-2591, ext. 210 or nphelps@fund.org.

Saving Threatened Ecoregions

World Wildlife Fund's "Pennies for the Planet" campaign is designed to educate kids about biodiversity and the concept of ecoregion-based conservation. This year, WWF teamed up with Scholastic Inc. to produce a "Pennies" poster that features this year's highlighted ecoregions—the Atlantic Forest of South America, the Everglades and South Florida, and



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DIVERSITY Calendar

February

February 4—Rosa Parks' Birthday

Known as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks was born on this day in 1913. Parks took a heroic stand in December 1955 when she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her fight for civil rights led to the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. To learn more, go to www.africana.com/Articles/tt_254.htm.

february

March

March 3—Hina Matsuri: Girls' Day

Hina Matsuri, also known as the Doll Festival, celebrates young girls throughout Japan. On this day ceremonial dolls are given to daughters and are displayed in the home for good fortune, happy marriages, and future happiness. Peach blossoms are also shared as symbols of femininity. For more information, check out www.ginkoya.com/pages/girlsday.html.

February 15—Lantern Festival

This festival, also known as the Shang Yuan Festival, is celebrated in China and Taiwan on the 15th day of the first moon. Decorative lanterns depicting birds, beasts, historical figures, and any of a number of different themes are carried by children or adorn temples. To highlight these glowing works of art, competitions are held. For more, visit www.chinavista.com/experience/quan/lantern.html or www.gio.gov.tw/info/festival_c/glue_e/glue.htm.

March 17—St. Patrick's Day

For thousands of years the Irish have honored their patron saint, St. Patrick, with religious feasts, festivals, and parades. The holiday celebrates St. Patrick's quest to spread Catholicism throughout Ireland. St. Patrick's day has spurred a life of its own throughout the world with festive displays of shamrocks and clovers, bagpipes, and, of course, plenty of green. To find out more, go to www.historychannel.com/exhibits/stpatricksday.

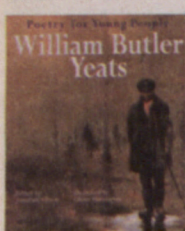
the Miombo Woodlands. You can donate your coins by visiting a Coinstar machine at your local participating supermarket. Use WWF's 4-digit code (8888) for your coins to be donated directly to the "Pennies for the Planet" program. For more information and to request a free "Pennies" poster, visit www.worldwildlife.org/windows/pennies.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Human Rights Teaching Materials

The U.S. Association for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees offers free teaching materials, including lesson plans, magazines, videos, and posters. The Human Rights Teaching Kit helps teachers prepare lessons that demonstrate the relationship between refugee protection, tolerance, and human rights. Visit www.unrefugees.org to view all free materials. Items can be ordered by contacting the UNHCR via e-mail at usawa@unhcr.ch or by calling 202/296-5191.

Ireland Through Poetry



William Butler Yeats spun the ethereal beauty of his native Ireland into poems, 26 of which have been compiled by edi-

tor Jonathan Allison in a full-color picture book. *Poetry for Young People: William Butler Yeats* includes a short introduction to each poem, explaining Yeats' sometimes-cryptic meanings. Large paintings, inspired by Yeats' work, accompany the poems. \$14.95

from Sterling Publishing. To order, visit www.sterlingpub.com.

Eat Your Veggies!

Picky eaters beware! Even Princess Picky cannot deny the magic hidden in her veggies. Marjorie Priceman's *Princess Picky* is a fast-paced, quick-witted account of one spoiled princess and the royal court's efforts to bribe her into eating her greens. 32 pp. \$22.90 from Roaring Brook Press. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com.



Gun Safety Video

A new animated video from the Michigan Education Association and the Lansing Police Department teaches young children gun safety. Approximately six minutes in length, "Scotty the Skateboard" instructs children that if they find a gun they should: 1) not touch it, 2) not go near it, and 3) find an adult. The video does not instruct on the use of firearms. \$10 plus s&h from MEA. To order, visit www.mea.org.

Job Search Help

Expert Resumes for Teachers and Educators by Wendy S. Enelow and Louise M.

Kursmark explains the right way to create a résumé for a job in education. More than 100 sample résumés from a variety of education professions are included to guide readers applying for their dream job. \$16.95 from Jist Works. To order, call 800/648-JIST or visit www.jist.com.



Weaver Delivers Your Message to Lawmakers

NEA President Reg Weaver has hopscoched the country since September, visiting with members firsthand to learn about their accomplishments and concerns.

What he's heard from members in the trenches—in visits from Little Rock, Arkansas, to Billings, Montana—is that public schools need support, not disdain or snake-oil "solutions." Unfortunately, support from policy makers and politicians is in too-short supply these days, while reforms-du-jour are hastily conceived and pasted on overburdened and underfunded public schools.

What are NEA members telling Reg?

- Speak up and educate those who condemn and demean public education. Do not let their message that "public schools don't work" echo unchallenged.

- Don't accept the conventional wisdom that schools need new challenges to get better. We're challenged already—by high class sizes, insufficient textbooks and supplies, and children harmed by physical abuse, hunger, or homelessness.

- Public educators need partners. We need parents and community members to work with us for great public schools, and we must have politicians willing to invest the necessary funds to make quality public education for all a reality.

Weaver hears regularly from members, and he carries their message to policy makers and legislators—those who craft the laws that constrain or unleash your work—across the United States.

In December, for example, Weaver spoke to the National Black Caucus of State Legislators in Indianapolis, Indiana, powerfully making the case that reform without resources is folly. Exhibit A: The new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is heavy on new mandates—such as expanded student testing and new requirements for teacher and para quality—but leaves much of the funding to cash-strapped states.

"Nothing makes me angrier than for the federal government to mandate school reform but not fund it," Weaver said. "An underfunded—in many cases unfunded—ESEA is a set-up for public schools to fail."

And if schools are portrayed as "failing" new ESEA standards, opponents of quality public education have the "solutions" at the ready: vouchers and more privatization.

Speaking passionately about efforts to entice poor and minority parents with vouchers, Weaver told Black legislators that, "Vouchers are as dangerous to education now as Jim Crow was 50 years ago. Diverting public money for private gain does nothing to help African-American children. Period."

"Shouldn't poor and disadvantaged parents in every one of your urban school districts have the same choice that 85 percent of the most affluent suburban parents have—the choice to send their children to free, quality public schools that are located in their own neighborhoods?"

We know the characteristics of great public schools, said Weaver: well-equipped facilities, high standards and expectations, small class sizes, quality teachers and support professionals, state-of-the-art technology, and interventions to assure that every public student gets the help he or she needs to succeed. If we fail to provide those ingredients to schools serving poor, minority, and immigrant children, "then we are making a conscious decision to leave those children behind."

"Our challenge is to make every public school as good as our best public school," Weaver told lawmakers, "and we need to stand shoulder to shoulder to rededicate ourselves to strengthening public education."

—John O'Neil



NEA President Reg Weaver, here talking with a member in Kansas City, regularly speaks with lawmakers on the importance of quality public schools for all.

Reed Hoffman

in the Light Lane

Bottom Feeder

As a middle school counselor, I found that three seventh graders wished to speak with me about some concerns they had about one of their teachers. After patiently allowing them to make their case, I acknowledged their frustration but explained that I had no administrative authority regarding the situation. Assuming they already knew this (which they had), I asked, "Why did you decide to speak to me about this?"

The prompt reply was delightful: "Well, we thought we would start at the bottom and work our way up."

Dan Rothberg
Piscataway, New Jersey

In my grade 4-5 music class, we were preparing to learn something new on the recorder. As I was finding materials on my cart, my resident tattletale announced that one of the boys was "using his recorder as a gun!" I thought for a moment and then replied, "Did he kill anyone?" The usually chatty class was quiet until I heard a mumble from the corner of the room, "Good one."

Kay Townsend
Minot, Maine

I stood at my classroom door as my little third graders headed for home. One boy stopped, looked up at me, and said, "You know, Mrs. Muhler, you could probably teach fourth grade, you're smart enough!" I thanked him kindly, for he had made my day.

Wende Hilyard-Muhler
Camano Island, Washington

While I was giving a lecture on ancient Greece in my high school world history course, I brought up the beginning of the marathon during the Persian War. As I unveiled the notes on the overhead screen, I asked the class, "What is a marathon?"

One excited student raised his hand and said, "Isn't that when they replay a bunch of old TV shows all in a row?"

David Laliberte
Saint Paul, Minnesota

While on hall duty in a high school, I noticed that a young man and young woman appeared as one body. I walked over and in my best teacher voice addressed the young man as Romeo, saying, "Didn't I see you with a different Juliet yesterday?" That broke the young lovers apart right away. Now they smile when

they see me in the hallway, proving that humor is more effective than a harsh reprimand.

Bunye Bomar
Lake Mary, Florida

During my first year of teaching, I discovered I was pregnant. Since I could not continue teaching, I chose to resign at Christmas break. On my last day, I wore a maternity dress. A first grader ran up to me and said, "I know what you're going to do!" Pleased by her attention, I asked, "What is that?" She replied, "You're going to get married!"

Glenda Myers
Liberty, Kentucky

During a unit on glaciers, my eighth graders were giving group presentations in which they were the "experts" on a particular feature of glaciers. When the group for "erratic" (a rock found far from its source) kicked off its presentation, the student presenter began with, "This rock is erotic."

Jodi Kyllonen
Glenwood, Minnesota

My seventh-grade math classes were working on the metric system. I asked, "Who can give an example of something weighing in milligrams?" Receiving no answer, I asked, "What do you have in your kitchen cupboard that is weighed in milligrams?" A boy in the front row raised his hand and sheepishly said, "a little pile of dust."

Barbara Daniel
Proctorville, Ohio

I teach visually impaired preschoolers at my school, and we include lots of bouncing and moving activities. One of my girls asked if we could hold her hands while she jumped on the "jumpaline."

Debby Eades
Indianapolis, Indiana

Modest Proposal

In my second year of teaching grades 1-2, I had the proposal of my life. A first grader ran up to me, gave me a huge hug, and proclaimed, "Mrs. B, I love you and I'm gonna marry you when I grow up." "That's sweet," I replied, "but I'm already married. What about my husband?"

"Oh," he replied confidently, "he'll be dead by then."

Joan Belan
Port Wing, Wisconsin

Kindergarten students were getting ready to work on a pattern project in the computer lab using Kid Pix software. One of the pattern lines used a small stamp of a flower followed by two larger flower stamps. I asked the class what needed to be done to make the flower larger—thinking that they would remember which keys to hold down on the keyboard to accomplish this.

A little girl raised her hand with all seriousness and responded, "You have to water it."

Margaret Tkach
Bridgewater, New Jersey

As a first-year teacher, I'm often challenged with the problem of tattling. In an effort to squelch this, I sometimes use the phrase "mind your own business" or MYOB.

The school librarian found my class very amusing one day when one of my students turned to another and loudly announced, "you guys better just BYOB."

Beckie Baker
Redding, California

A group lesson was interrupted by the classroom phone. The children waited patiently as I took a message from the office and seemed to get back on track when I returned to them. One boy's hand shot up and I expected a question about the subject at hand. Instead, he asked, "Ms. Wise, why do you always answer the phone 'Alien Wise?'"

When the laughter subsided, I explained to him that I was NOT from another planet!

Aileen Wise
Plymouth, Michigan



Dave Gapper

"When do we get our tattoos?"

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane" *NEA Today* 1201 16th St., N.W. Washington, DC 20036 Fax: 202/822-7206 Send e-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your e-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an e-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

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There's been an interest rate showdown, and NEA members have come out on top again! Grab hold of the NEA *Platinum Plus*® Visa® Credit Card for a money-saving 0% Introductory Annual Percentage Rate (APR) on all cash advances and balance transfers – after six months you'll enjoy a low 9.9% Variable APR.† That means you and your family members^Δ can save big when you transfer high-interest balances, or get some cash for a vacation getaway.

Plus, this card is loaded with all kinds of benefits and features* such as no annual fee, high credit limit, secure online account

access, optional payment holidays, and much more.† And remember, you can carry more than one Visa credit card so there's no reason not to call today to apply for the best card in town!

Call toll-free 1-888-758-7946,
priority code FK3E.
TTY users, call 1-800-833-6262

nea Member Benefits
www.neamb.com

PLATINUM PLUS
the new standard

*Annual fee for the NEA *Platinum Plus* and NEA School Days credit cards: None. The Indexed Annual Percentage Rates (APRs) for purchases and cash advances are 9.9% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* card and 11.85% for the NEA School Days card; each Indexed Rate APR may vary. The current introductory APR offer for all Cash Advance transactions (including Balance Transfers) made with either account is 0% through your first six statement closing dates effective upon the opening of your account. If your minimum monthly payment is late (i.e., not received by 2 p.m., ET, on its Payment Due Date), or when the introductory APR expires, the non-introductory APR for your account ("Indexed Rate") is calculated using the Variable-Rate Information. If your payment is late, the Indexed Rate is applied to new and outstanding Cash Advance balances as of the first day of the billing cycle in which the payment was late or not received. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances; credit card cash advance checks and balance transfers is 2% of each cash advance (\$2 minimum, \$30 maximum). Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, person-to-person money transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets and casino gaming chips is 2% of each such purchase (\$2 minimum, \$30 maximum). **Transaction fees are waived on balance transfers requested with your application. MBNA allocates your payments to balances (including new transactions) with a 0% APR before balances with higher APRs.** Balance transfers and/or cash advances of any kind may not be used to pay off or pay down any other MBNA account. If your available credit cannot accommodate any transaction, fee and/or finance charge, the account will be subject to over-the-credit-limit costs. **REMINDER:** To obtain the benefits of the grace period for new purchases, you must pay your New Balance Total in full and on time.

†Payment holidays are subject to availability. If you are eligible for, and take a Payment Holiday, finance charges, if any, will accrue on your balance. See your Credit Card Agreement for details.

ΔThe NEA Credit Card Program has been developed for NEA members and their families only. Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse or domestic partner, and children. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and benefits offered through the Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process; standard credit review procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

MBNA America Bank, N.A. is the issuer and administrator of this credit card program.

The information about the costs of the cards described in this application was accurate as of 12/2002. The information may have changed. To find out what may have changed, please call (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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*Certain restrictions apply to each benefit as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, i.e., benefit coverage amounts are lower. NEA School Days Card credit line runs from \$500 to \$5,000, while NEA *Platinum Plus* credit line is from \$5,500 to \$100,000 for eligible applicants.